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TELLING *VS* SHOWING: SHAKESPEARE'S CHOICE IN CASES

S. Viswanathan

In Shakespeare, word and action, word and stage setting or the total stage picture, and the three among themselves, set up a complex interplay and interaction. The word, all said and done, plays, however, the chief role, though the visual components of Shakespeare's drama are an important part of the whole theatre language through which the total communication is effected. It is so if only because after long periods of neglect or misunderstanding as mere spectacle, in spite of continuous traditions of theatrical life, the visual element of the drama came into its own as a crucial critical factor more or less only in twentieth century scholarship. The basic conventionalistic orientation of the stage presentation on which Shakespeare could make absorbing variations entailed stage conditions which practically rule out direct onstage presentation of certain items and phenomena. Besides the use of emblematic or symbolic stage properties and of evocation, through word scenery and poetic depiction, the effect of such items was brought home by Shakespeare. For example, horses and horse-riding are occasionally invoked across the plays. Since as a rule these cannot be brought onstage (except perhaps in the case of a dancing horse), the words and offstage noises do the work. The feat of fine horsemanship, so much cherished in the Renaissance culture, is depicted in almost enthusiastic admiration, for example that of Prince Hal in *Henry IV* Pt. 1 (4.1.96-110) and of Lamont the Norman lord in *Hamlet* (4.6 81-93), both through reports. Generally reporting, messages by messengers and other characters, the commentary by the Chorus in certain plays are an essential part of drama. These features are well recognized and quickly understood.

Of interest, however, is the question, as it arises with reference to particular situations or 'happenings', on the part of the playwright whether to show by stage depiction or to tell or to do both and how much and when, is a matter of artistic and theatrical judgment and choice. Especially in certain particular significant instances,

Shakespeare makes the choice. The dramatic sense and theatrical discrimination and the factors which may govern the choice are worth exploring. It is a particularly worthwhile enquiry, given the way some leading directors who have to make a similar choice in presentation would seem to have been insufficiently mindful of whatever the artistic factors may be behind Shakespeare's own choice. On another level, in Shakespeare telling is showing, in the sense that the power of Shakespeare's creative dramatic poetry makes the words enact and carry home the sense. The question raised here may be said to be a special category of the general, larger one of the relationship between oral-aural and visual in Shakespeare's drama.

A mention of two particular instances, both from *King Lear* which we will discuss in more detail later, will make the issue clearer. Goneril (1.4. 266-276) enragedly charges her old, hunting-tired and famished father King Lear with responsibility for what she alleges to be the riotous behaviour of the king's hundred knights which according to her disturbs the peace of the palace household and creates near-chaos. She goes on to announce her decision to curtail Lear's train by half. Shakespeare never depicts the knights as riotous at all, in so far as these appear with the result that there is no evidence in the play for the charge. The second example is the poisoning of her sister Regan by Goneril. The poisoning is never shown onstage as happening. The fact comes as an effective theatrical surprise only the moment it takes effect and is killing Regan. Two different reasons of dramatic design would seem to be behind Shakespeare's way in these two cases. However, directors choose to present ocular evidence of the riotousness of the king's train and the actual deed of poisoning in their staging decisions.

In *Macbeth*, exceptionally among the tragedies, the central factor for the tragic complication, Duncan murdered is never shown on the stage while all the rest of the developments and the speeches for a good part of the play have reference to the murdered Duncan. The murdered body is not shown at all, and practically all the other killings and deaths take place offstage. What could be behind the phenomenon may be worth considering.

II

Let us take a look at these instances of Shakespeare's choice between telling and showing, and a few other examples, before we go on to consider a related issue. Some of the artistic and theatre factors behind the choice will become clear. To begin with the two telling instances from *King Lear* already mentioned, Goneril's grievance against Lear, and her complaint to him about the riotousness of his retinue may well have been a fictional invention deliberately brought up as a ploy in her and Regan's joint plot to cut Lear to size by cutting his train of a hundred knights by half. The hundred knights are Lear's by nights as part of the contract of settlement of the realm on his two elder daughters. That Shakespeare does not show more than four knights at a time together and that only once, and that he never shows any of the knights as indulging in undisciplined and noisy, let alone rowdy and vandalistic behaviour, is not simply to be put down to the lack of acting personnel in his company. Goneril chooses to confront her old father, hunting-tired, hungry and impatient for dinner, and shocks and surprises him into rage by announcing her decision to curtail his retinue of knights to fifty. Actually, at worst, the knights as they return from the hunting may have raised a clanging of their hunting gear and boots as they stepped on the floor and came rushing. That is all that the playwright indicates through offstage noise. The careful spectator may well discern Gorneil's plot as the play progresses from this scene and the scene set in Regan's place in the next act.

Yet, in spite of the playwright's signals, some directors, at least from Peter Brook famously in his epoch-making Royal Shakespeare Company production at Stratford (1962), have chosen to take Goneril at her word, and ostensibly presented in their staging evidence of the knights' riotousness. Brook at the end of act 1 showed the furniture in the dining room all upturned with Goneril and Albany, dejectedly and helplessly contemplating the ruins. The director does so in an interpretation which leans too much in justification rather than extenuation of Goneril, and Regan too. That Goneril's charge is part of her plot together with Regan to do Lear down, becomes

clearer as the play progresses to act 2 scene 2 the scene of Lear's encounters with Regan (see especially II.115, 330 and 370). It is a premedidated design of the two sisters together, as the cited lines refer to letters passing from Goneril to Regan and Cornwall. [Citations from *King Lear* are from the 'Arden 3' edition by R.A. Foakes, 1997].

The second example from the play is the handling of the diabolical poisoning of Regan by Goneril in order to get rid of Regan now a more eligible because widowed rival to her in her illicit love to Edmund. Shakespeare deliberately reserves the fact of poisoning to come as a surprise in order that it adds to the dimensions of the evils she stoops to, exactly at the moment of the exposure of these with which Albany confronts her. It is part of the playwright's subtle manipulation of the spectator's response. So Shakespeare avoids giving any earlier indication of the secret poisoning. The moment of revelation in this regard comes at 5.3., at the hour of truth for all three the two sisters and Edmund, as Albany springs to action, and the force of this theatrical highlight is enhanced by the revelation which comes in her icy aside. By then Regan has fallen fatally sick and withdraws from the scene; we make the chilling inference from Goneril's aside as she sees Regan collapsing,

> If not, I'll ne'er trust in medicine (5.3. 97)

Yet, in a most recent RSC production of the play with Ian McKellen as Lear, the director introduced the act of poisoning as a stage happening in an earlier scene with Goneril doing it in a sleight of hand fashion as the sisters sit at dinner at Goneril's place. In the process of this, the dramatic point of Shakespeare in reserving the poisoning as surprise gets lost. We could thus see that Shakespeare's as opposed to some directors', way with the two episodes discussed from *King Lear* is for two different dramatic purposes in the two cases.

Could there be a special dramatic logic and deliberate strategy behind Shakespeare making *Macbeth* a *tour de force*? Alone among the tragedies in *Macbeth* neither the dead body of Duncan, leave alone his actual murder, nor any other dead body is exhibited on stage but for that of young Siward slain in the typical hero-war-

rior's death with the wound on his chest on the filed of battle, and the displayed severed head of Macbeth a stock stage property then, and it is a play which abounds in killings. Duncan dead is a conspicuous onstage absence and a dramatically influential and almost constant offstage presence. In the case of Duncan doubling exigencies in the theatre could not have been a factor, given the total pattern of a scrupulous refrainment on the dramatist's part who makes only one exception which simply proves the rule. It has been suggested that Shakespeare observed a special decorum in this play in deference to the sensitivities of his monarch King James I who witnessed a performance put up at Oxford. The view implies a 'King James Version' of *Macbeth*; that is, the view that the play was written for King James I's viewing and Shakespeare intended to please his monarch by celebrating the relatively new king's lineage and to observe a special decorum to please the royal taste. But the real explanation seems to lie within the play itself.

The dramatic logic behind Shakespeare's unusual practice in the play perhaps springs from his instinctual dramatic perception that in the theatre, especially that of poetic drama, it is imaginatively evoked impressions which communicate the ultimate effect and make the impact on the spectator, what Maurice Morgann in the eighteenth century rightly called 'secret impressions' ('Shakespeare contrives to make secret impressions upon us'.) The idea is particularly applicable to *Macbeth*. It is a play where a whole series of imaginative sense impressions are called up through the conjoint power of poetic imagery, rhetoric, diction, theatre and stage phenomena, major and minor, action, gestures, vision and similar suggestions. The play's mode of communication may be called sensational, almost visceral and liminal from time to time. Shakespeare's conception and dramatic presentation of Macbeth the protagonist in the play is in this mode; that is perhaps how Shakespeare manipulate audience response so that on the total impression Macbeth is by no means to be dismissed as 'this dead butcher' but a figure imbued with imaginative life, senses and total sensibility though these pay the penalty of the warping that overtakes them and that with his full consciousness of the damage. That is how the way is

pointed to a certain balance of judgment and sympathy on the spectator's part. The dramatic point of Shakespeare's 'special decorum' in the play is to be perhaps sought in this feature of *Macbeth*

A somewhat like logic seems to operate, though on a minor key, in Shakespeare's early middle history plays *King John* and *King Richard II* which two form a chronological sequence. These two are exceptional in that no battle is actually shown as fought onstage, among all the history and Roman plays. Deaths there are in *King John*, but no killing takes place onstage, they come as 'back-stage' events in both the plays. However in *King John*, the battle arrays, confrontations, preparations for the fighting to be sparked off any moment and all the din and bustles are there prominently. But it all just stops short. Things are poised for battle but it does not occur onstage. Like the situation, so to say, of the horse in Roy Fuller's poem, it is always going to go, but never goes, so much so that it is a battle scene without the battle. The happening at the beginning of *Richard II* sets the cue for this in the play, the jousts which are all set to be fought at by Mowbray and Bolingbroke only to be called off by King Richard II at the very last moment. The two plays are a sort of crossroads in Shakespeare's development. It is as if Shakespeare himself was tired of the large number of battles in the earlier *Henry VI* trilogy.

III

In *Much Ado about Nothing* 'overhearing' or 'nothing/noting', the word being homonymic in Elizabethan pronunciation, plays a key role. The 'notings', the word also connoting the sense of 'over-hearing' then, play a key role in forwarding the action and movement of the play. While Shakespeare shows all the rest of these as stage happening, he refrains from doing so in the case of the most con-sequential overhearing, or rather overseeing from a distance in the dark light of night by Claudio. Claudio is deliberately duped into concluding that he has witnessed a nocturnal window assignation between Hero his bride-to-be the next morning and an illicit lover. It results in his rejection of Hero at the altar with a slander the next morning. Were it to be staged, the watched action would appear to

him as a mime, as it would to Othello when he is set up to watch the goings on between Iago, Cassio and Bianca, though their dialogue is heard by the audience. Shakespeare avoids staging it in *Much Ado*, with the dramatic result that the saving truth of the matter, that the villains Don John and his accomplice Borachio had contrived it in their design to wreck the wedding comes out, though it is revealed late, through another 'noting' or overhearing about Borachio's plot by the watch who chance to eavesdrop on the conversation, again at night, and understand it only vaguely that some wrong has been done through a stage managed show at Hero's chamber window. The irony is that it is found out by of all people the bumbling watch of the dull constables Dogberry and Verges. It comes to suggest in the final analysis a paradigm illustrative of the Erassnasian paradox of the Fool being wise, and seeing the truth. Such an effect is facilitated by the non-staging of the central 'noting', which at the end amounts to 'nothing'. It possibly lends to the appropriateness of the play's title, which at times is taken to be a light hearted and casual choice of title by the playwright.

In the last scene of *As You Like It*, Shakespeare brings about a rather swift romance closure of the play which as a whole builds a varied structure on the grid of pastoral romance. Jaques bids farewell to the senior Duke and by now crowded company, giving them news that Duke Frederick has undergone a metamorphic transformation on his warpath to the Forest of Arden, by conversion at the hands of 'an old religious man' in the forest. Jaques announces that he would go to the new convertite in order to imbibe wisdom from such a one. Johnson, moralist and a believer in overt moralism that he was, regretted that Shakespeare missed an opportunity to provide edification to audience and readers in not staging the scene between hermit and acolyte-to-be. But the playwright could know by instinct that the greater moral good was the imagination. In the imaginative execution of the play, Shakespeare uses romance elements (in the source romance of Thomas Lodge and elsewhere) in a tongue-half-in-the-cheek manner. The 'old religious man' is romance cousin to the 'old religious uncle' in the same forest whom Rosalind invents in her love-cure of Orlando earlier. The lioness and

the serpent from which Orlando saves the sleeping Oliver, together with his fight against the beast, are all romance properties, better heard of than seen, though some early editors of the play offered woodcuts of beast, reptile and man asleep, for example, W.J. Rolfe in the late nineteenth century.

IV

In *The Tempest* Shakespeare's presentation of the sea storm, itself a magical evocation by Prospero's 'art', is a good example of the playwright's twin deployment of showing and telling. The opening storm scene would have been enacted with an emblematic properly boat. But the direness of the SOS situation is carried home by the din and bustle, enactment of the storm effects by the players and the exchanges between boson and sailors on the one side and the king's party on the other. The sailors' down-to-earth realism and commonsense, and the desperateness of the others, indicatively for the spectator tempered by Gonzalo's unperturbed attitude and remarks, signal the strong note of realism that qualifies the romance of the play. In the very next long scene, Shakespeare also provides evocative accounts of the progress and intensity of the storm by touched eye-witness Miranda and by spirit-agent Ariel, with the rhythmic variations to the storm scene of long leisurely retrospect by Prospero and the sleeping figure of Miranda. So much so that in the total impact a full impression of the storm is made, set off by contrast.

V

The sheer fertility, range and variety that Shakespeare's scenic imagination and envisionment could command, once again comes out illustrated in his choice in the cases considered Shakespeare manipulates, as though with prestidigitation, the resources of word and the various means of visual stage representation and thus subtly shapes spectator response. What strikes us is the poet-playwright's scenic sense acting in complex harmony with the creativity of poetic imagination, with the result that a certain artistic and dramatic control and economy in the use of resources is also achieved.

FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY: THE SHAKESPEAREAN PERSPECTIVE

Iffat Ara

The plays of Shakespeare seem to insinuate feminist philosophy through characters as it was conceived by thinkers through the ages. This concept had its inception in the minds of modern philosophers who launched the notion of the presence of the 'rational self' which in turn was related to the liberal exposition of the rights of women like men. As she does not lack intellectual and creative powers, a woman can enter the domain of life with an acute awareness about things around herself. The self-renewing potential possessed by women can blossom forth in consonance with the radical views expressed by eminent men like Rousseau, Voltaire and Kant. Hence women enthusiastically participated in the struggle to assert themselves and demanded their rights. This intellectual movement not only enriched the existence of women by giving them new roles in the social, political and intellectual spheres of life but it also judged them in terms of their inherent potential and propelled them in their onward march towards the emergence of the self.

Female wit can be used as a liberating force because it has tremendous potential to reinforce her views and therefore with her indwelling logic a woman can preserve her existence and assert her identity. Shakespearean women use wit to maintain their position, to resolve tensions, to assert their authority against men's supremacy, to use their resourcefulness and to face harsh criticism levelled against them. Mary Wollstonecraft, much later than Shakespeare, emphasized the intellectual toughness of a woman who could acquire a separate identity without the aid of institutions and the security offered by man. She knew well that such an effort on the part of women required a serious and purposeful discipline. And therefore she aimed at assisting women to exercise their right to vote, to inherit property, to acquire education and legal rights and also take up any profession of their choice. She wished to see women steeped in education to be partakers of all forms of power. They are thus likely to attain economic freedom and legal status with reference to marriage.

The feminists laid emphasis on the fact that women contributed to a large extent to the welfare and enhancement of the family. And Shakespeare's plays also suggest a similar feminist philosophy through the presentation of the fragmented existence of the heroines. Men are disinclined to let women acquire pre-eminence in matters of education and marriage. Desdemona's father in the play Othello challenges the possibility of an authentic relationship of his daughter with a foreigner and wants to impose his authority in this regard:

> A maiden never bold;
> Of spirit so still and quiet, that her motion
> Blush'd at herself; and she, in spite of nature,
> Of years, of country, credit, everything,
> To fall in love with what she fear'd to look on! (Act I, Sc. iii 94-98)

But Desdemona stimulated by the attention and love of Othello blooms forth into a new existence. She emerges as a morally courageous woman and immersed in her dotage and submission to her husband Othello, justifies the stability of their newly formed relationship in the bond of marriage before the Roman senate. This strong woman full of the warmth of love and delicacy of feeling exercises her wisdom and sagacity to minimize the discomfiture caused by her act of rebellion:

> My noble father,
> I do perceive here a divided duty:
> To you I am bound for life and education;
> My life and education both do learn me
> How to respect you; you are the lord of duty,
> I am hitherto your daughter: but here's my husband;
> And so much duty as my mother show'd
> To you, preferring you before her father,
> So much I challenge that I may profess
> Due to the moor my lord. (Act I, Sc iii 180-188)

John Stuart Mill reviewed the multiple aspects of the relevance of equality and freedom with reference to women. And his representation in this regard led to the intellectual elevation of women. But in Shakespeare's plays that are marked by characteristic strokes of feminism except for Rosalind in *As You Like It* who wrote verses on the barks of trees to enchant her lover and Portia in *The Mer-*

chant of Venice who exercised her wit and wisdom in the guise of a lawyer, there is rarely a mention of the imposing impact of educated women. And yet his heroines are projected as competent and intelligent and do not possess an under developed intellect.

From time immemorial women are compelled to accept their inequality to men in physical strength. Hence Imogene in *Cymbeline* suffers, Desdemona in *Othello* dies an unnatural death and Hermione in *The Winter's Tale* declines in health and apparently meets a tragic end. And yet they cast the spell of their hidden virtues and become exponents of resolute womanhood. Women were supposed to know sewing, cooking, art, music and embroidery. Hence they were erroneously regarded as decoration pieces and were not given a chance to educate themselves and be self-assertive. But a striking image of women is presented by Shakespeare when certain female characters in his plays skillfully develop the art of music and embroidery to uphold their prestige in corporate life and generate a spirit of active participation in the social sphere. As Marina in *Pericles* declares her positive points:

> If that thy master would gain by me,
> Proclaim that I can sing, weave, sew, and dance,
> with other virtues, which I'll keep from boast;
> And will undertake all these to teach. (Act IV, Sc. vi 181-184)

The concept of freedom but not in a revolutionary spirit motivates the female figures in Shakespearean plays. Nature in all its richness and fecundity is also free and self-generative. It follows the universal law in matters of growth and existence but is bound by no external forces. Man imposes a pattern upon what is formless in Nature and yet Nature has its own fascination. This self renewing power is also found in Shakespeare's best women. The young maids in Shakespearean drama are quite independent and are the agents of freedom and rebirth. They are the explorers of a better future for themselves. Even an ignorant Shepherd in *The Winter's Tale* keeps spotlit in mind the image of hospitality represented by his dead wife. He urges Perdita to possess those dimensions of personality that may qualify her to be placed on the same pedestal of eminence as her foster-mother:

Fie, daughter! When my old wife liv'd, upon
This day she was both pantler, butler, cook;
Both dame and servant; welcom'd all, serv'd all,
Would sing her song and dance her turn; now here,
At upper end o'the' table, now i' the' middle;
On his shoulder, and his; her face o' fire
With labour, and the thing she took to quench it
She would to each one sip. You are retired,
As if you were a feasted one and not
The hostess of the meeting. (Act IV, Sc. iv 55-64)

The country setting is full of the graces of fine living from which the horrors of primitive life have been eliminated and the new woman with her aspirations for creative thinking, true love, constancy, chastity and firmness brings in the flashes of new life. Sometimes women like Paulina belonging to a low level of life is capable of providing relief through her medicinal words and gentle forcefulness:

If one by one you wedded all the world,
Or from the all that are took something good,
To make a perfect woman, she you kill'd
Would be unparallel'd. (Act V, Sc i 13-15)

Florizel in *The Winter's Tale* emphasized Peradita's dynamic and comprehensive personality long before her real identity is revealed:

What you do
Still betters what is done. (Act IV, Sc. iv 129)

And a little later he confesses the truth to this effect:

She is as forward in her breeding as
She is i' th' rear' our birth. (Act IV, Sc iv, line 578).

He also brings the hidden radiance of her life to view:

When you speak, sweet,
I'd have you do it ever: when you sing,
I'd have you buy and sell so; so give alms;
Pray so; and, for the ord'ring your affairs,
To sing them too: When you do dance, I wish you
A wave O'th' sea, that you might ever do
Nothing but that; move still, still so,
And own no other function: each your doing,
So singular in each particular,
Crowns what you are doing in the present deeds,
That all your acts are queens. (Act IV, Sc. iv 136-45)

Also his father Polixenes perceives a healthy generation to emerge

from the marriage of a nobly born with the product of a countryside. And hence he admires the intelligent and liberated kind of woman named Perdita who possesses a chastened existence:

> ... nothing she does or seems
> But snacks of something greater than herself
> Too noble for this place. (Act IV, Sc. iv 157-158)

Shakespeare basically loved freedom of all kinds including freedom of life in the countryside, and that of women in the exploration and communication of experience and also insight into human nature. He was charmed by his own daughter whose image never vanished from his mind. He specially depicts young country girls associated with Nature. He presents three categories of women through his plays. The young girls who are often ambitious, intelligent and most positive in their outlook. The elderly and experienced women whose presence and imposing personality govern those men who come into contact with them. Lastly, there are those meek and gentle but happy women who are always given a place in the scheme of harmony.

Queen Elizabeth I had an imposing personality for she was possessed of great power and wealth like her father King Henry VIII. Cordelia in *King Lear* was also a challenging lady who maintained her dignity and reacted sharply to her father's wilful blindness regarding his demand for excessive love. Queen Elizabeth I remained a virgin Queen to become an emblem of power who did not surrender herself to male dominance. She visualized herself to be the bride of her country. Queen Elizabeth I was a domineering figure for she was not merely a power-seeker in matters of politics but was also an educated lady who probed deeply into the recesses of knowledge and patronized learning and scholarship. Women in her times were well-educated and no one dared to oppose the education of women. No wonder Cordelia was ambitious enough to compete her father in eminence. This valiant lady brought an invading army to rescue her father for she had a lot of understanding of human nature. Lear also realized later Cordelia's selfless love for him which made her superior to her sisters. She reconciled with her reverened father on a kiss and the happy man lost his selfhood thus:

Come, let's away to prison;
We two alone will sing like birds i' the' cage. (Act V, Sc. iii 8-9)

Shakespeare's play, *The Taming of the Shrew,* touches upon the tender relationship of man and woman. 'Love' and 'Service' epitomize the inward feelings of the heroine who becomes dedicated to her husband after she perceives her irrational behaviour in human dealings. To seek happiness she becomes calm and submissive. Shakespeare always idealizes happy marriages. According to him a perfect housewife should exercise her wisdom to ensure peace and harmony within the home. Kate confesses this truth thus:

I am ashamed that women are so simple
To offer war where they should kneel for peace. (Act V, Sc. ii 22-23)

Shakespeare was born in Stratford at a time when Protestant Reformation had involved human consciousness to the extent of making it an impelling force even in creative writings. His plays reflect lucidity of intellect but also stimulate an awareness of Protestantism that had a deep impact on the English nation. He thus engages the attention of both the monarchs and the public who equally admired his art. Shakespeare was committed to neither politics nor Protestantism but his consciousness was extremely religious and hence he judged his characters accordingly when old ties are broken, human ambition prevails and injustice leads to a state of suffering and despair. The two old men in *King Lear* complain of 'filial ingratitude' and grope in a hostile world where they yearn for justice, authority and love.

At the abdication ceremony held by Lear at his court Cordelia's candid and disarming confession regarding her sane attitude towards parental love is not unlike the plain speaking of a Protestant. She retains her egohood to the end. And her matter-of-factness in assimilating the entire cosmos of her father by her guileless and direct words of consolation is expressed thus:

O, look upon me, Sir,
And hold your hand in benediction o'er me:
No, Sir, You must not kneel. (Act IV, Sc. vii 57-58)

And the king thus gives full-throated response to Cordelia's blessed existence and Nature also ensures protection to her and cleanses her 'doors of perception'. Lear's daughters are in fact protagonists

of preserving the self-identity of women. Cordelia does not accept the love calculus prepared by King Lear beforehand to be accepted by the three daughters, She does not yield to the pressure exercised by King Lear. And yet like a meteor she shines brightly and her sense of compassion and forgiveness reflect her endurance and heroic stature. Love of truth and sense of duty adorn her feminine nature. She is loved by all and is also capable of loving others. Her inhibitions would not let her reveal her inner self. And yet she champions the cause of woman and protests against the enforced absorption into love of power and strong sense of egotism exhibited by King Lear.

Viola in *Twelfth Night* is also possessed of feminine qualities of gentleness, fertile imagination, modesty and a sort of quiet wisdom. These attributes make her excel the other female figures in Shakespearean drama who disguise their identity by putting on male attire. Rosalind has natural vitality of spirit that makes her reign supreme in an unfriendly world. Portia is possessed of sharp intellect, spark of wit and strong will power that make her dominate a critical situation in the play indisputably. Viola may not be so forceful but the purity of conscience, well-integrated impulses and motivations and gracefulness reflect her feminine nature. Owing to these she is able to overcome the difficulties she is involved in. In the duel scene her feigned manhood gives way to her softness of nature. But still she resolves to serve Orsino and be loyal to him:

> I'll do my best
> To woo your lady :— (Aside) yet, a harmful strife!
> Whoe'er I woo, myself would be his wife. (Act I, Sc. iv 40-41)

She is shrewd for she does not unpack her heart through mere words like Orsino nor is she thoughtless in her expression of love like Olivia. Instead she is modest enough to accept Orsino's love at second-hand which Rosalind and Portia would have rejected with cold indifference. Viola is the most sensitive person in the play whose criticism of love is marked by irony. Even Maria, a maid-servant, uses her sharp and witty tongue to disclose Malvolio's hidden faults. Also with her cleverness she successfully attracts Toby and decides to marry him eventually. In a man-centered universe these

women establish their superiority over men like Queen Elizabeth for whom Shakespeare expresses admiration in his plays.

In *Love's Labour's Lost* and *As You Like* it one comes across clever and assertive ladies who are in search of recognition and security. These plays reflect on the theme of affectation versus naturalness. The women like Rosalind and Rosaline with their vivacity evidenced by their wit, wisdom and control over the linguistic medium threaten men, enjoy their company, furnish matter for their philosophy of life, seek freedom and do not confine themselves to the conventional role of women. Rosalind was not only perceptive in her choice of Orlando but also made a sustained effort to educate him through her strategy and combativeness. According to Helen Gardner, *As You Like It* is the "most consistently played over by a delighted intelligence." Thus the role of heroines in Shakespearean drama proves that the consummation of human experience is incomplete without the participation of women who are perceptive and have a superb creative potential.

The Lady of Belmont named Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* with her pungent satire makes a critical assessment of the shades of human character. She is able to restore the missed opportunities to men with her sense of calculation and resourcefulness. Both in appearance and reality she is shrewd and convincing:

> And yet a maid hath no tongue, but thought. (Act III, Sc. ii 8)

The music she arranges to be heard by Bassanio gives him a clue to attain his objective. Further in the mercy speech as well she ridicules and also entraps the unbalanced shylock and thus magnifies the impact of intellect through her enormous power of manipulation:

> The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
> It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
> Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest,
> It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes. (Act IV, Sc.i 180-183)

In *Romeo and Juliet* the most potent and meaningful confession of romantic love is linked up with Juliet whose abundance of wit is brought out thus:

> My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
> My love as deep: The more I give to thee,
> The more I have, for both are infinite. (Act II, Sc. ii 131-135)

Desdemona in *Othello* is very decisive in her choice of Othello for she depends entirely on her maturity and instinctive sense of Judgment:

> I saw Othello's visage in his mind. (Act I, Sc. 252)

Desdemona also possesses city manners and many more accomplishments. Othello rightly takes pride in her self-sufficiency:

> So delicate with her needle! an admirable musician ! O, she will sing the savageness out of a bear. Of so high and plenteous wit and invention. (Act IV, Sc. i 177-178)

The young maidens in the four Last Plays are versions of goddesses who are architects of beauty of the phenomenal world. Marina plays with flowers by the side of water. Imogen is absorbed in the company of 'flower-like boys' who are her brothers. Perdita plays the role of the flower goddess in the sheep-shearing festival and Miranda is coupled with the Prince who appears to be a god to her. This young generation presents the image of rebirth, courageous vitalism and also reflects heroic naturalism, chastity, constancy and the sanctity of love. These women moulded by Nature emerge into a pure, illumined and liberated kind of existence, for in a malign universe they are able to retain their selfhood and nourish themselves on the exaltation of reason and moral values. Marina preserves her chastity and makes use of artistic talent to enjoy a separate existence. Perdita is inspired by her beauty of imagination, creativity, native intelligence and argumentative bent of mind. She reviews the relation of Nature and Art and will not accept Polixenes way of reasoning. Like Hermione she is clear headed and capable of reshaping things for her own purposes.

The church, reformers and moralists emphasize the worth of the institution of marriage that fits into the social polity. Hence family appears like a spring of life. Women are very enterprising and if they are possessed of strong individualism like lady Macbeth they inject poison into the minds of their husbands. Macbeth also envisions things in the light of self-interest and therefore Lady Macbeth suppresses her instinct of feminism and criticizes Macbeth for his unmanliness:

> Yet do I fear thy nature.
> It is too full o'th' milk of human kindness. (Act I, Sc. v 16-17)

This indictment threatens Macbeth's concept of human relationships and family ties. Lady Macbeth's frustration arises out of her being childless and also perhaps due to lack of sexual fulfilment. She is eaten up by the desire for excessive power and exercises her feminine will to turn her husband into an iron-souled man who thus alienates himself from all convivial sources. This self-estranged man is ultimately faced with the feeling of the meaninglessness of human existence. Therefore, Lady Macbeth, instead of colouring Macbeth's personality with grace, mingles evil in the yarn of his life. Thus her sexual provocation and feminine appeal wipe off the pricks of conscience and Macbeth confess the truth to the following effect:

> I have no spur
> To prick the sides of my intent, but only
> vaulting ambition, which o' erleaps itself.
> And fall on th' other. (Act I, Sc. vii 25-26)

Lady Macbeth becomes an emblem of the assertion of womanhood. She does not yield to the pressure exercised by Macbeth. On the contrary she forces him to go on with the plan of killing Duncan and thus he gets involved into a whole chain of murders that he enacts fearlessly and without any qualms of conscience.

The 'Roman matron', married women of the upper class exercised immense power and yet sacrificed their womanhood for the good of the family and of Rome. Also if they consented to become the partners of men they humbly shared all kinds of pains and sorrows with them. Cleopatra was slightly different in this regard for she was conscious of her own authoritative position. Women in Egypt enjoyed greater eminence than those who lived in Rome. Women ruled men in Egypt and therefore Antony sacrificed his heroic stature to please the self-possessed Cleopatra who nourished herself on love of power and pleasure of the senses. His heroism is now confined to the narrow sphere of eroticism. Shakespeare and his contemporaries approved the magnificence of women rulers. Queen Eligabeth and Cleopatra exploited the strength and weakness of men to impose their authority upon them. And yet the famous Queen had greater distinction and keenness of intellect compared to Cleopatra. 'The barge she sat in' speech exhibits the radiance of Cleopatra's

personality that mesmerized the Romans:

> The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne.
> Burn'd on the water: the poop was beaten gold;
> Purple the sails, and so perfumed that.
> The winds were love-sick with them; the oars were silver,
> Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
> The water which they beat to follow faster,
> As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
> It beggar'd all description: she did lie
> In her pavilion – cloth of gold, of tissue –
> O' er-picturing that Venus where we see
> The fancy outwork nature. On each side her,
> Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling cupids,
> With divers-colour'd fans, whose wind did seem
> To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,
> And what they undid did. (Act II, Sc. ii 191-204)

Antony's power of judgment was vitiated by Cleopatra and thus he was feminized:

> ... he fishes, drinks, and wastes
> The lamps of night in revel. (Act I, Sc. iv 4-5)

All the eminence that Rome enjoyed due to the personal greatness of its heroes came to nothingness due to the enigmatic charm of Cleopatra whose attraction "age cannot wither her, nor custom stale" (Act II, Sc. ii 235). She considered this mutual attraction between two persons of equal merit to be a royal privilege which was unchallenged. And Antony lost self-control when he was calculatedly misinformed that Cleopatra had committed suicide as Gail Kern Paster says: 'The clouds are Antony's body dissolving his self-sameness melting away.'

Gertrude in *Hamlet* asserts herself and defends her son Hamlet. She may be regarded as an example of both self-control and self-assertiveness and is capable of standing against the odds of life. Queen Hermione in *The Winter's Tale* is gloriously enchanting due to her womanly graces, indivisible love for her family, depth of character and controlling powers to impose her will at the right moment. Carnillo defends the Queen when Leontes accuses her of infidelity:

> But I cannot
> Believe this crack to be in my dread mistress,

So sovereignly being honourable. (Act I, Sc. ii 321-23)

This luminous character is created on the principle of honour whose visual representation is her daughter Perdita whose ingenuousness the feminists admire. Paulina in *The Winter's Tale* is rightly drawn as fearless and assertive. Her energetic action in a male-dominated world removes all doubts and uncertainties and brings harmony where chaos had otherwise prevailed. She exhibits her art for the final assessment of Leontes' character:

As she live'd peerless,
So her dead likeness, I do well believe,
Excels whatever yet you look'd upon
Or hand of man hath done. (Act V, Sc. iii 14-17)

She wins over the self-centred Leontes who through the process of learning recognizes the sacredness of the bond that highlights the feminine appeal of his queen.

Ophelia in *Hamlet* shows lack of self-assertiveness, withdrawal from active life and lives in a world of dreams. And yet this love-lorn maiden in a state of anguish and in a disturbed state of mind suppresses her sexuality and chooses her own way of life. She takes refuge in a nunnery and thus gains the wholeness of personal identity. Shakespeare is a keen observer of women and therefore his acute analysis of women of all ranks and kinds reflect all shades of feminism. In most of his plays women seem to have a distinctive character and disposition. They speak less but when they do they engage our attention and focus on the main issues under consideration. Shakespeare has honoured women more than any other dramatist except Moliere and Shaw. In the comedies women always triumph over men and in the absence of women men regain their lost identity. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is a play written at the command of the Queen and it is the most representative play regarding feminism. Shakespeare's happy women have softness of temperament and yet they are sustained by their courage and hopefulness. His ideal women are articulate and fascinate others by an interplay of their head and heart. The comedies present glimpses of happy and bold women whose wit and presence of mind make them penetrate the entire action of the play. The vision of marriage

which highlights the concept of love is at the highest and is activated by the presence of women.

Shakespeare, through his feminist philosophy that explicates life and characters at all levels, attempts to show that for greater human happiness a saner view towards feminism should be adopted. He seems to believe that self-assertiveness in women should not be taken in the negative sense because wedded mistresses preserve family values.

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"ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE": IN DEFENCE OF INDIAN DRAMATIC ART

Meena Sodhi

Indian dramatic art is primarily indigenous in its culture and is essentially a fusion of many elements of varied aesthetic and culturally defined forms. Drama in antiquity, as we know today, was a creation of autochthonous genius and as such it is not only unique in its nature but is also older than the Greek tragedy and Chinese ancient drama. In fact it is more than 2000 years old in its scope and range. *Natyashastra* (200BC-400AD), written by the mythical Bharat, may face a problem in its dating of conception, but the document is India's attempt at shaping its own theatrical philosophy and theory. Colonialism perhaps pushed the theoretical framework into the background, but any serious scholar of Indian drama and theatre knows that without the study of *Natyashastra*, which covers all aspects of drama like stage-setting, music, plot-construction, characterization, dialogue and acting, his scholarship is incomplete.

"Natya, " as defined by Bharata, is "the mimicry of the ways of the world," therefore drama, like all other arts, is imitative. The primitive man's instinct to imitate the action of people and nature around him, sowed the seeds of drama. The bronze figure of the dancer from Mohenjo-Daro bears testimony to the fact that the inhabitants of the era of Indus valley civilization were familiar with the art of dance.

Writing for *Theatre India*, M.R. Anantha Murthy was being analytical when he said that India is a land of multi-culturalism and that it is more of "a civilization than a nation in the European sense" (November 11, 2005 145).Therefore it can be said that Indian drama is distinctive due to its heterogenity and its polyglot character. The term 'theatre' incorporates various performances like the Raas, Ramlila, Bharatnatyam, some folk like chhau, tamasha and nautanki, and the modern commercial plays, newspaper productions, theatre for educational purposes and musicals. We can even include mime, song and puppetry and lately the nukkad drama. Some form or other of drama was enacted as part of religious festivities for entertain-

ment, for tourist attraction or just for celebration of life after a good harvest. Tejan Bai's enactment of the *Mahabharata* is an extension of this tradition. Having said that it is important to mention that when we use the term "tradition" in the context of drama, we do not mean only the drama in Sanskrit. Similarly, the term "National Theatre" should not imply only the plays performed in Hindi and in the nation's capital. India is a vast country and every region has its own distinct identity, be it in cuisine, attire, art or literature.

Sanskrit drama witnessed a golden era and reached glorious heights under the patronage of aristocracy and the court with playwrights like Bhasa (500BC-50BC), Kalidasa (2BC-5AD) and Bhavabhuti (8th century). However with the Moghul invasion around twelfth century, Sanskrit drama became decadent. A revival of modern Indian drama could be possible only under the British rule. The impact of Western civilization was quite forceful on the Indian way of life and the repercussions were felt directly on various art forms including drama. English education opened new channels for the Indians, many of whom could now read and assimilate Western drama. This led to a rejuvenation of drama in India. Various troupes from England and other European nations toured India, particularly the port cities of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, and the Indians became familiar with Shakespearean plays like *The Merchant of Venice, Hamlet, Othello,* etc. These plays were also translated and adapted to suit various Indian languages.

The English theatre in India had its origin in the eighteenth century in the social get-togethers, parties, in the clubs of English traders. The Renaissance in Bengal, the mingling of twin cultures, one foreign and the other indigenous, helped in bringing about a revival of literary arts. The establishment of Hindu College in Calcutta in 1819 made Bengalis well-versed in the English language. It led to a number of Sanskrit plays being translated into English and the plays of Shakespeare into Bengali. The city of Bombay too saw a resumption of theatrical activities by the Parsis who were quick to accept the Western education.

> Intercultural experimentation is at some level, an inextricable part of modern Indian theatre, be it drama, in English or any other Indian language. Some

> may define it as a 'hybrid' form, an inevitable consequence of post-colonialism, others as the necessary outcome of modernity; but modern Indian drama consistently found itself having to either choose "between an ancient classical or folk tradition on the one hand, and an international Westward looking theatre based on modern techniques and theories of performance on the other." (Multani 15-16)

Girish Karnad, in the introduction to *Three Plays,* is critical of the Indians for following the "signposts put up by the West, when our own theatrical culture is so rich as to have its first play written as early as AD 200" (4). His annoyance is particularly with those innovators of drama and theatre who were living mainly in the port cities and eagerly adopted a kind of "cultural amnesia" as a deliberate design. Incidentally these cities had no past of their own apart from the British legacy they had inherited. Towards the close of the nineteenth century, the Indians were imitating dramatic creativity mostly in the mother tongue. The various forms they ventured into were romance, opera, comedy, farce, tragedy, melodrama and the historical plays. Some of these plays were: Khadikar's Marathi mythological play *KeechakaVadha*, Hindi opera *InderSabha* by Amanat, and Tagore's symbolic plays *The Post Office* and *Mukta Dhara* in Bengali.

> Thus, by 1920 in almost all the Indian languages a new drama was thriving, reflecting potent influences of Marxism, psychoanalysis, and the Symbolist and Surrealist movements. (Dhawan 11)

With a country so rich in dramatic traditions, why is it that Drama, like some other forms of literature, particularly in English, continues to be a kind of 'poor relation'? Or as M.K. Naik and Shyamala A. Narayan say that it is a "Cindrella still waiting for her prince", "yet to establish itself as a viable genre." To prove its worth, drama has not only to be read but has to be performed as well to survive and for that the foremost necessity is a theatre. Indian English drama of the pre-independent era was rich in its themes, technicality, poetic excellence and had symbolic overtones, laden with morality. However it had one drawback: it was not made acceptable to the stage performances. The only dramatist of significance was Asif Currimbhoy whose plays had a social purpose and at the same time they could be staged. Moreover, the plays in English generally

get the same 'elite' audience over and over again and hence do not have a far-reaching or all-inclusive effect.

Indian writing in English has been more or less dominated by only one genre, the novel. Novelists like Vikram Seth, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Amitava Ghosh, Kiran Desai, Chetan Bhagat, to name a few, belong to the privileged class of writers, who grab all the media attention and a hefty sum of money as advance payment only with the mere announcement of their new work of fiction. It assures them an elite status in the society, an extremely comfortable lifestyle and even international acclaim. Now with Arvind Adiga winning the Man Booker Prize the popularity chart of fiction is soaring to unprecedented heights. Next in the category of fame are poets like Kamala Das, Keki N. Daruwala, Jayanta Mahapatra and many others. These are the poets who are read and "studied" at the various universities across the country. It helps in keeping them 'alive' and established in the literary canons. Some forms, the not so 'popular' or 'neglected' genres of Indian writing in English, are autobiography, biography, essay, short story and drama. Autobiographies are slowly making inroads into the mainstream, all because of sensational life-stories being 'revealed' by our media hungry political leaders and film personalities. Biography and Short Story are still in the developing stages as is the Essay. The print industry produces a number of journals, newspapers in which essays and short stories can very easily be accommodated and can enjoy a wide circulation.

Moving on to drama, it can be said that modern Indian drama in India began as a move to decolonize it from the British dominance after independence in 1947. Some influences of Western dramatists like Shakespeare, Ibsen, Shaw, and Eugene O'Neill on contemporary Indian theatre cannot be doubted or denied. But it is also true that the dramatists of the country turned to traditions, the indigenous aesthetic culture and dramaturgy for subsistence. Narayana Pannikkar and Girish Karnad can be named as the two initiators of this movement. Karnad's ability to universalize the individual and social predicament through the medium of drama fetched him Jnanpith Award. The existentialist crisis of modern man is

conveyed through strong individuals who are the victims of psychological and philosophical conflicts. His use of myths and legends with an aim to depict a new vision is his typical hallmark. Vijay Tendulkar (1928-2008) is called "India's most revolutionary playwright and Marathi theater innovator" (*Outlook*, May 27-June2, 2008). The impact of Tendulkar's dramatic excellence, dealing mainly with middle class problems, was felt over the entire country. This happened due to the availability of his plays in other Indian languages, including English plays like *Ghasiram Kotwal* (1973), which dealt with an extremely bold theme of revenge, that in a way reminds one of Iago, became a landmark in the history of theatre.

Another dramatist, who forms a strong pillar of support to the contemporary drama, is Mahesh Dattani. Dattani is the realist representative of contemporary urban, social experience as the appropriate subject of drama and theatre. His use of English language to depict Indian sensibility is not a colonial baggage but it is the language of contemporary Indian social environment. His bold representation of certain issues like communalism, homosexuality, etc. make his drama a platform for showcasing the evils and relevant problems of the society and the playwright an iconoclast, much like George Bernard Shaw in another country and another era.

Any kind of fruitful development of art, especially drama/ theatre, is closely linked to the type of patronage given to it. Until the nineteenth century kings and nobles gave their full support to it and therefore the entertainment houses were free for all. With the disappearance of nobility in the country, the audience had to 'pay' to see the play. Hence it was at the risk of producer to stage it and to see whether it was a 'success' or a 'failure'. Dr. Samuel Johnson had said, "drama's laws drama's patrons give." Consequently with the advent of the 'talkies' in 1930s, the patrons shunned not only the Parsi theatre but all the regional ones as well. Theatrical activities need a sense of belonging to public at large, to communities in particular. After the 'talkies' came the television with its multichannel facility and numerous soaps, which further pulled away the crowd from the theatres. This led to the dampening of the spirit of the dramatists.

Today, in the era of globalization, people want everything in a 'fast forward' mode. Thus the leisure hours one can spend at the theatre are being eaten away by visits to the malls, multiplexes. Perhaps there is a ray of hope emerging out of the darkness engulfing the theatre and drama, particularly in English, which is no longer being considered an artificial language, "not suited to the Indian stage" (*India Today*). And it is the single most unifying element of the new generation. Girish Karnad too has started writing in English, which he no longer considers to be "an alien language." A host of young Indians are writing in English and recent newspaper report in the *Times of India* (May 20, 2008) has listed a number of individuals who have left their lucrative jobs in order to follow their creative urge of writing plays and that too in English: third in the list of languages used for instruction and popularized as a medium of learning.

Ziya Us Salam (*The Hindu*) discussed the growing importance of translation studies because of which "India and Bharat are beginning to talk and enrich each other." Literary works from Hindi, Tamil, Marathi and Urdu are getting translated into English. Hopefully it will help in forging a link between the different parts of the country and enrich the domain of dramatic art. Does it ring an optimistic note for drama written in English? Is it an assurance that we will see more writers translating their creative urge into dramatic art? Will these works find an audience in the theatres across the country? Will the young urbane Indians who speak and understand English make the theatre come of age? The future will unfold answers to these queries and then we will know whether the theatrical activities will be invigorated and regenerated or will have a backslide.

The Writers' Bloc Festival organized in Mumbai in 2007 by the Royal Court Theatre, London, in association with Rage Theatre Productions bears testimony to the questions posed above. Besides providing a platform for writing and presenting plays in English, it held more than hundred workshops, far exceeding the ones held for languages like Hindi and Marathi. Young playwrights like Swar Thounaojan and Ram Ganesh Kamatham wrote and presented plays like *Turel* and *Crab*; they were assured of getting their works performed. It does not stop here: Kamatham is now a writer-in-resi-

dence at the Royal Court Theatre; he became so confident of his newly found talent that he left his lucrative job as a software engineer to write plays in English. Other playwrights who can be placed in the same category are Gautam Raja the writer of *Vaidehi* (for him English is the only language for writing), Gauri Ramnarayan the author of *Flame of the Forest,* Anupma Chandrashekhar and Harsha Daudapani. Ramu Ramathan wrote plays like *Polyster 84* and *Cotton 56* ; he never wrote for money but for sharing his ideas through the medium of the theatre. Some other writers whose plays are making inroads into the theatrical world are Gurucharan Das, Manjula Padmanabhan and Poile Sengupta. Girish Karnad, however, is skeptical about such endeavors when he says: "... it's a thankless job. First, you might never see your play staged, second, you will never earn a livelihood from writing for the stage, and third, with the life that we lead in the metros today who can blame people if they don't come to the theatre to watch plays? If a writer's choices are writing for stage, television or films, only a great obsession for the stage would make him or her choose the stage" (*India Today*).

This obsession is seen in Mujeeb Khan of Mumbai, who does not wait for people to come to the theatre, but takes the plays to them, in the streets. Khan has aken the initiative of projecting current events before the public. His troupe is doing exemplary work by using journalistic approach and technique to target contemporary events. The recent terror siege of Mumbai was presented as a street play, *Ay Ab Bus Bahut Huwa...Teri To.* The play was put up within three days of the attack by Khan's theatre company, Ideal Drama and Entertainment Academy (IDEA), by taking inputs from newspaper reports. This is the usual method undertaken by the group, which is assisted by people from almost all walks of life: youngsters from colleges, management graduates, shop owners and corporators. Khan's theatre group is a team with a purpose, an objective: it is not only for the sake of art and entertainment. They bring issues and problems faced by the common people into focus and at the same time are doing much to popularize theatre and drama.

Thus this is one of the ways to bring drama into the mainstream of literary focus. But most importantly it is necessary to

create a culture of theatre at the academic level and the best place to start is the school. A teacher can easily work with students, who, as young minds, are energetic, enthusiastic and can easily be moulded to love drama and theatre. The teachers can also guide their students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in universities, where the infrastructure, patronage, funding and other facilities are easily available. The departments of English at various universities across the country have courses involving the genesis of European drama, British and Indian dramatists like Ibsen, Shakespeare, Marlowe, George Bernard Shaw, T.S. Eliot and also Rabindranath Tagore, Girish Karnad and Mahesh Dattani. Such curriculum does much in popularizing drama among the students who are also taught the theory of drama. They often stage plays as part of their Annual Day celebrations or for other cultural events. Some of the students coming from English medium schools are already familiar with the British dramatists and are well versed in the nuances of drama. Special courses at postgraduate level can be prescribed which can enable interested students to opt for them. The departments of English can organize workshops inviting theatre personalities or contemporary dramatists to discuss the technicalities of drama and to initiate the students to write one-act plays themselves.

Some universities, like the Mumbai University, have a department of theatre and generate their own funds. What is essential therefore is to encourage the academicians to pamper this art form and to take it out of the secluded university campuses to the common man. Plays can be staged and a cross section of the society can be invited as audiences. Each region has its own repertory, which should reflect the multicultural aspect of this country: the needs of every region are different. These can be made the resource centers, which can continue to interact with the one at Delhi. It will prove to be a positive effort in merging all the diverse trends into a national entity.

The National School of Drama under the HRD ministry has three-year training programme in dramatics leading to PG diploma: it is the only one of its kind in India. Since the last two-three dec-

ades the supporters of Indian theatre have been making all efforts to establish its identity under the prevalent new conditions. There is a continual endeavor to establish a new relationship between theatre and the dynamic and long-lasting values of life, culture and ethos of the people of India. However, it is very important to stress here that artistic expression should have absolute freedom. And when an artist deals with relevant issues plaguing the society, some self-appointed crusaders find political overtones or violation of cultural norms in art. Thus these artists are prohibited, banned or harassed and at times even threatened. This can make us pause and question the moral and reformative processes of art. We know that social awareness generated during the freedom movement brought about a change in the mindset of all the creative writers. They transcended their early obsession with mythological themes to social problems like the economic oppression, women's plight, and individual freedom. It was particularly true of drama that found new ways of adapting the classical themes to the sensibilities of the modern audience, which wanted more realistic portrayals.

Taking the cue from Aristotle and his *Poetics*, we know that drama represents men in action and therefore it helps the audiences to understand and assimilate the vagaries of life perhaps in a much better way. Conveying a message or suffusing it with moralistic flavour may help in laying bare the troubles of the society, with an aim at reformation, more cogently and thus it can become a motivational force in activating a cross-section of people. Let not the *saas-bahu* serials detract and kill the urge and instinct for dramatic creativity in those who have a passion for it and opt to make a financial career in its pursuit. Drama has to break the syndrome of being a 'coterie art' and let its writers be as hopeful as the eminent theatre personality and director Faisal Alkazi who remarked that "the art world faced the same dilemma a few years ago. But now paintings are being sold for crores. Hope the same happens to Indian theatre. All we need is good plays with strong stories, characters and dialogues." (*Times of India*)

With a country so vast and a culture so rich it should be the endeavor of each individual to revive and nourish its arts. Maybe

what the world of theatre needs is a brand name to bring it into the mainstream of the world of performing arts. *Evam* is one such "bubbly young theatre company "(*India Today*), which is out to challenge, with great élan, the Karan Johars and Ekta Kapoors of Indian cinema and television. It has already caused ripples across south India with its thirty member team and an expected revenue of Rs.7 crore. Its founders, Karthik Kumar and Sunil Vishnu, plan to adapt Chetan Bhagat's *One Night @ the Call Centre* and stage it across the subcontinent. Perhaps now we can be optimistic and sanguine about the future of Indian English drama. It is an assurance that this genre will be able to compete with other more popular forms of writing and entertainment industry and establish an important space in the days to come.

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"A BORN WRITER": SOMERSET MAUGHAM'S ESTIMATION OF LEO TOLSTOY THE FICTIONIST

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Though enamoured of the illustrious French fictionists like Balzac, Stendhal, Flaubert, Maupassant, the Goncourts and Anatole France, Somerset Maugham could not escape the all-pervasive impact of the celebrated Russian fiction writers like Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Chekhov, and referred to, and wrote about, them time and again in his expository writings thoughout his long, successful literary career. He felt an irresistible fascination for Russia and Russian language and literature, as he states in his non-fictional work, *The Summing Up*: "Russia was very much in the thoughts of people then and I had a mind to go there for a year, learn the language of which I already knew the rudiments and immerse myself in the emotion and mystery of that vast country. I thought that there perhaps I might find something that would give sustenance and enrichment to my spirit" (189-90). In the same book, a little later he acknowledges the greatness of Russian fictionists and their importance for him as a writer: "But I could not miss the opportunity of spending certainly a considerable time in the country of Tolstoi, Dostoievski and Chekov; I had a notion that in the intervals of the work I was being sent to do I could get something for myself that would be of value..." (196). Then, in his another significant non-fictional book, *A Writer's Notebook*, he stated, as early as 1917, that he, like most of his contemporaries, got deeply interested in Russia because of her fiction writers like Tolstoy, Turgenev and Dostoevsky whose works articulated an emotion that was strikingly different from any explored and communicated in the novels of other countries. Furthermore, he asserted that their novels completely overshadowed the works of such distinguished and popular British and French fictionists as Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, Balzac, Flaubert and Stendhal by exposing their basic weaknesses — viz. artificiality, delineation of mainly the middle-class world, etc. To quote his own words:

> They made the greatest novels of Western Europe look artificial. Their novelty made me unfair to Thackeray, Dickens and Trollope, with their conventional morality; and even the great writers of France, Balzac, Stendhal

> and Flaubert, in comparison seemed formal and a liitle frigid. The life they portrayed, these English and French novelists, was familiar; and I, like others of my generation, was tired of it. They described a society that was policed. Its thoughts had been thought too often. Its emotions, even when extravagant, were extravagant within ordered limits. It was fiction fit for a middle-class civilization, well-fed, well-clothed, well-housed, and its readers were resolute to bear in mind that all they read was make-believe. (*A Writer's Notebook* 139)

Also, in this very book in 1941 Maugham proclaimed Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Balzac and Dickens to be "the four greatest novelists the world has ever known" (305).

As Maugham was a very popular creative writer of his time with a number of best sellers — *Of Human Bondage, The Razor's Edge, Cake and Ale* and hundreds of short stories and several dramas — to his credit, so when he was in the United States in early 1950s, the Editor of *Redbook* asked him to prepare the list of the ten best novels in the world which he did and sometime later an American publisher approached him to write an introduction to each of the ten best novels chosen by him, and importantly he included in this list two masterpieces of Russian fiction — Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and F. Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov.* Obviously, this evidences his belief in the sterling, resplendent merits of the two eminent Russian fictional genuises, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. His perceptive observations on, and estimation of, perhaps the most outstanding novel till to-day — *War and Peace* — are contained in his varied expository writings, especially in the volume, *The World's Ten Greatest Novels*, which first appeared in 1954 under the title *Ten Novels and Their Authors.* Owing to paucity of space, in this paper I shall concentrate only on his statements about Tolstoy and his works.

Maugham affirms repeatedly that Tolstoy was "a born writer, and it was his instinct to put matters in the most effective, dramatic and interesting way he could" ("Leo Tolstoy and *War and Peace,*" *The World's Ten Greatest Novels* 45). Thus, while speaking of the nature and essential elements of the novel, he refers to Tolstoy's *War and Peace.* He points out that the novel is a narrative of certain length, and can be as long as Tolstoy's *War and Peace* — a volu-

minous work, indeed — "in which a succession of events is related and a vast number of characters are displayed through a period of time, or as short as *Carmen* " ("Ten Novels and Their Authors — The Art of Fiction," *Selected Prefaces and Introductions of W. Somerset Maugham* 17-8).

One of the fanatical admirers of Marcel Proust, whose monumental work, *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu,* Maugham regards as the greatest novel produced in the twentieth century, and he attributes its greatness to the novelist's power to create original, variegated and lifelike characters, and in this respect he is equal to Dickens, Balzac and Tolstoy (7). Thus, Tolstoy, according to Maugham, is the touchstone to define the novel and to evaluate the worth of the works of even the greatest writers of the world. Obliquely, here he accentuates the Russian's innate capability of portraying a world inhabited by living and realistic people which is one of the most important criteria of a lasting work of literature. Also, he underlines "*the scope and the broad humanity of Tolstoy*" (*A Writer's Notebook* 162).

Maugham enumerates some of the essential qualities of a good novel. One of these is that it must explore and communicate a theme of wide interest by which he means that a great novel deals with a subject which has immense appeal not only to a clique of persons but to general men and women of all countries and times. He affirms: "... the theme should be of enduring interest: the novelist is rash who elects to write on subjects whose interest is merely topical. When they cease to be so, his novel will be as unreadable as last week's newspaper" (*Selected Prefaces and Introductions of W. Somerset Maugham* 15). The author should concentrate on topics of great concern to most of the human beings — viz. life's meaning and value, soul's immortality, God's existence, war, etc. And the subject he focuses on must be an integral part of the story he narrates and of the persons he portrays — their actions emanating from it and it developing them. Maugham has great admiration for Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* and Tolstoy's *War and Peace* because they are concerned with matters/ topics of everlasting universal appeal, such as the meaning and significance of life, war,

peace, etc. His unreserved praise for Tolstoy's masterpiece is justified, for ever since the inception of life in the universe, nothing has been as perennial and haunting as war and the efforts and desire to seek peace. Patently, *War and Peace*, despite its treatment of the temporal and historic event of Napoleonic wars and the graphic portrayal of the social and political milieu of that period in all details, will never lose its interest for mankind because of its preoccupation with the basic, eternal theme of war and peace.

Maugham comprehends correctly the different attitudes of the fictionists of varied Western nationalities like the French, the English, the Russian and others. Though himself a British, he could appreciate the classical sense and the orderly minds of the French that produced well-shaped works with themes properly developed and other things well-organized. At the same time he could perceive the value and validity of English and Russian novels lacking in precision and good form. Thus, his unbiased, right understanding of art enables him to see and pinpoint greatness in a shapeless, large narrative like *War and Peace,* for the life we know, in the words of Maugham, is like this "with its arbitrariness and inconsequence" ("The Complete Short Stories, Volume I," *Selected Prefaces and Introductions of W. Somerset Maugham* 60). It certainly goes to his credit that despite affinity with the French masters and prepossesssions in the arts "on the side of law and order" (60), he, unlike another master fictionist of this kind, Henry James whose notorious denunciation of *War and Peace* as a "large, loose baggy monster" is well-known, highlights the immense worth of the works of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and others. He is fully aware that the unmistakable dramatic value and tightness of effect have their own disadvantages, for "life does not dovetail into its various parts with such neatness" (60). Little wonder a great artist usually does not meticulously arrange life to suit his purposes, and does not distort facts to his advantage and to his plan because this inevitably makes his picture of life artificial and unconvincing. Tolstoy is outstanding because in his major works he paints a picture of life, of human nature and sets it before us, without bothering whether we acquiece it or not.

Maugham, though not enthusiastic about new experiments with themes and technique of fiction, admits with admiration the Russians' contribution to the widening of the scope of the novel. They could make the novel an artistic exposition of the economic, political and social ideas and problems of their age. Thus, they "brought something new to fiction, but by the circumstances of their civilization they were inclined to subordinate art to social questions" ("*Traveller's Library* — 'General Introduction," *Selected Prefaces and Introductions of W. Somerset Maugham* 82). Maugham holds that notwithstanding his concern for his milieu, a novelist can create great fiction only when he focuses on a subject pertaining to "the common vicissitudes of humanity, birth and death, love and hatred, youth and old age," for these, indeed, are the subjects of great fiction (83). Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Chekhov are distinguished fictionists because their works concentrate on the subjects of permanent and timeless value, the common aspects of humanity.

As most of the fictionists write both novels and short stories, Maugham, himself an outstanding fictionist, gives due consideration to the contribution made by the Russian fictionists, including Tolstoy and Chekhov, to the growth and new dimensions of the short story. In his opinion, the Russians gave a new vigour and life to the short story which had become tediously mechanical and unattractive to the reader in the second half of the nineteenth century, despite the popular and great stories written by Maupassant in France, Rudyard Kippling in England and Bret Harte in America. The three celebrated Russians — viz. Tolstoy, Chekhov and Turgenev — imparted new life to an exhausted form; they "to a large extent transformed the composition and the appreciation of short stories" ("*Teller of Tales* — 'Introduction'," *Selected Prefaces and Introductions of W. Somerset Maugham* 98). The Russians wrote stories of quite another type and undoubtedly "made of the short story something new and vital" (97). Commenting on Tolstoy's achievement as short story writer, Maugham asserts:

> ... the inventor of the Russian story as we know it was Tolstoy. In *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, ... there is a great deal more than the germ of all the Russian stories that have been written since. It comprehends all the merits and all

the defects of the Russian story. (97-8)

Maugham attaches a lot of importance to fiction dealing with the culture of the world — fiction which every well-bred man would like to read —, but he laments that there is not much of this kind of fiction, which makes a man spiritually richer. The books by two Russian novelists that Maugham puts in this category include Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov.* The illustrious Russians give the reader "that thrill, that rapture, that fruitful energy which great art can produce" (103-04). According to Maugham, Tolstoy is, indeed, simply marvellous because he, like Balzac, impresses the reader with "the power and fullness of his personality" (104). What is striking about his fiction, along with the writings of some of his distinguished contemporaries, is that he shows how "the conditions of existence have affected their attitude towards the elemental things of life and love and death which are the essential materials not only of poetry but of fiction" (117). Maugham holds that variety may not be a merit in a poet, but "it surely is in a writer of fiction" ("*A Choice of Kipling's Prose* — 'Introduction'," *Selected Prefaces and Introductions of W. Somerset Maugham* 126), and this we find unequivocally in Tolstoy the fictionist. Like a good writer of fiction, he has the peculiarity, more pronounced in him than in any other man, and has not only one self, but "several, often discordant aspects of his personality" (126).

Tolstoy wrote the greatest novel of the world at the age of thirty six, "an age at which an author's creative gift," in Maugham's view, "is generally at its height" ("Leo Tolstoy and *War and Peace,*" *The World's Ten Greatest Novels* 25), and the apparent subject of it was Napoleonic wars, the climax of which was Napoleon's invasion of Russia and the burning of Moscow resulting in the retreat and destruction of his armies. He initially intended to present in *War and Peace* a family saga, a story of a family of the gentry, and the historical events related to Napoleonic wars were to form only a background. But during the course of writing it, he changed his stance and made its canvas larger and deeper by imparting more and more importance to "the titanic struggle between the opposing powers" and by investing it with "a philosophy of history" based on his ex-

tensive reading (26). His philosophy of history sets forth his belief that the common view that history is shaped and directed by great men is erroneous; instead, it is affected by "an obscure force" that runs through the people and leads them unknowingly to triumph or failure. Thus to Tolstoy, to quote the words of Maugham:

> Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon were no more than figureheads, symbols as it were, who were carried on by a momentum they could neither resist nor control. It was not by his strategy nor his big battalions that Napoleon won his battles, for his orders were not obeyed, either because the situation had changed or they were not delivered in time, but because the enemy was seized with a conviction that the battle was lost and so abandoned the field. For Tolstoy the hero of the invasion of Russia was the Commander-in-Chief, Kutuzov, because he did nothing, avoided battle and merely waited for the French armies to destroy themselves. (28)

This unique view of history undoubtedly evinces the author's insightful grasp of reality and lends the temporal and spatial events — the Napoleonic wars — a universal touch and a rare depth. But due to his quest and portrayal of historical facts, he mars, to a great extent, the artistic value of the book, and that is why Maugham opines that Tolstoy's writing so many chapters about the factual retreat of Napoleon from Moscow just to illustrate his idea of history "may be good history, but it is not good fiction" (28) because it is an expanded digression that hampers the emotional continuity of the narrative and damages its thematic and formal unity. Undoubtedly, these long digressive chapters towards the end of this bulky book are uninteresting and fatiguing, and spoil the aesthetic side of it, but Tolstoy amply makes up for it in the epilogue which is a piece of brilliant invention. Most of the novelists before him would tell the reader what happened to the principal characters after the story was over, but they would do so "perfunctorily, in a page or two, and the reader was left with the impression that it was a sop the author had somewhat contemptuously thrown him" (29). It was Tolstoy who first made his epilogue really significant and functional. Thus, in the epilogue we are taken after seven years to the world of main characters. We are told how Nicholas Rostov has married a rich lady and has children, Pierre and Natasha visit them, Natasha is married and has two children, etc. Further, we are informed that their all high

hopes have evaporated and they lead a commonplace, dull and complacent life in their middle age after bearing a lot of suffering and hazards. The apparently happy ending is intensely tragic in that the great transformation which has taken place in their lives is highly moving, but it looks convincing and true to life, thus making the ending artistically brilliant and fascinating. A small part of Maugham's analysis of it is worth citing here:

> Natasha who was so sweet, so unpredictable, so delightful, is now a fussy housewife. Nicholas Rostov, once so gallant and high spirited, is now a self-opinionated country squire; and Pierre is fatter than ever, good-natured still, but no wiser than he was before. The happy ending is deeply tragic. Tolstoy did not write thus, I think, in bitterness, but because he knew that this is what it would all come to; and he had to tell the truth. (29)

Notwithstanding his kinship with the French fictionists, Maugham opines that the looseness of form that we clearly perceive in *War and Peace* does not detract from its merit because it enables the writer to resort to digression in order to write about any topic of his choice (though not directly related to the basic theme) which is usually entertaining to the reader and is relevant to the author's age. Apropos of this, Maugham writes:

> The author is human, and he has his fads and fancies; the looseness of the form, especially as the novel is written in England and Russia, gives him the opportunity to dilate on any subject dear to his heart, and seldom has the strength of mind or the critical sense to realize that, however interesting it may be to him, unless it is necessary to the working out of his novel it has no place in it. It is besides almost inevitable that the novelist should be susceptible to the fashions of his day, since after all he has an unusual affectibility, and so he is often led to write what, as the fashion passes, loses its attractiveness. ("The Ten Best Novels of the World," *The World's Ten Greatest Novels* 18)

Maugham attributes the greatness of *War and Peace*, to a large degree, to Tolstoy's masterly skill in character-creation. His wonderful fecundity is evident from the fact that this book is crowded with as many as five hundred characters who are "sharply individualized and clearly presented" (26) without the least tinge of repetition and tediousness, and this is certainly a rare achievement. Furthermore, what is remarkable about his art of character-portrayal is that unlike most of the novelists like Dickens, Fielding and

Thackeray who have written massive novels, he has not concentrated only on two or three persons or on a single group but almost on all the important members of four aristocratic families — viz. the Rostoys, the Bolkonskis, the Kuragins and the Bezukhovs. And it is, indeed, very difficult for a writer to handle a situation when he has to deal with a fairly good number of characters, belonging to different groups or types, in consonance with the requirement of the theme he intends to explore and communicate because he has to make his shifting from one group to another plausible to the reader, who, while reading about one set of persons for the time being, gets inquisitive to know what is going on with others about whom he has not been told anything for some time. This is certainly a difficult test for the writer, but Tolstoy gets through it most impressively. Highlighting this aspect of his genius, Maugham avers: "On the whole Tolstoy has managed to do this so skilfully that you seem to be following a single thread of narration" (26).

No doubt, Tolstoy based his characters, like most of the writers of fiction, on the real people he chanced to know in his life, but his men and women are much more than their originals, and not the mere photographs/ replica of their models. In fact, "by the time his imagination had worked upon them they had become creatures of his own invention" (26). This is true of all the notable characters in *War and Peace.* Thus, the thriftless Count has his germs in Tolstoy's grandfather, Nicholas Rostov in his father, and Princess Mary in his mother. The two main male characters in the novel, Pierre Bezukhov and Prince Andrew, are the projections of the author himself, and Maugham believes that he did so in order to comprehend his real self in its totality. To quote his own words: "... it is perhaps not fantastic to suggest that, conscious of his own divided personality, in thus creating two contrasted individuals on the one model of himself he sought to clarify and understand his own character" (26). Pierre and Prince Andrew are poles apart from each other, but are alike in that they, like Tolstoy, are obsessed with the mysteries of life and death but miserably fail in their quest. Their dissimilarities are well-marked. Prince Andrew is romantic, proud of his class and position, and noble-minded, but suffers from weaknesses like haughtiness,

dictatorial attitudes, irrationality and intolerance. Obviously, he is a mixture of virtues and vices and hence very engaging and true to life. Strikingly different from him in appeal, Pierre is gentle, sweet-natured, generous, modest and self-sacrificing, but, in Maugham's view, "so weak, so irresolute, so easily hoodwinked, so gullible that you cannot help feeling impatient with him. His desire to do good, and be good, is touching, but was it necessary to make him such a fool" (27)? Clearly, Maugham is of the opinion that Tolstoy does not succeed fully in his delineation, though many scholars, including me, may differ from him because a great writer as Tolstoy is, he portrays different types of persons having different kinds of appeal for different readers. But Maugham is correct in his judgment that Tolstoy writes "some very, very dull chapters" (27) to depict how Pierre becomes a Freemason to look for an answer to the tormenting riddles pertaining to life and death.

Maugham feels that Natasha, who is Count Rostov's younger daughter and who is loved by both Pierre and Prince Andrew, is the most delightful, arresting figure invented by Tolstoy and she surely contributes much to the excellence of the book. This is the novelist's unique artistic triumph, for, as Maugham asserts, "Nothing is so difficult as to portray a young girl who is at once charming and interesting" (27). Maugham rightly points out that usually the young girls in fiction are colourless like Amelia in *Vanity Fair*, priggish like Fanny in *Mansfield Park*, very clever like Constantiae Durham in *The Egoist,* little geese like Dora in *David Copperfield*, stupid flirts and unbelievably innocent. They are awkward subjects for the writer to deal with because at that tender age the personality of a person does not develop fully, and hence the writer can only portray the charm and beauty of their youth. But Tolstoy does much more than this in the case of youthful Natasha and therein lies his command of the art of character delineation; he paints her wholly natural, "sweet, sensitive and sympathetic, wilful, childish, already womanly idealistic, quick-tempered, warm-hearted, headstrong, capricious and in everything enchanting" (27). Thus, though the great Russian has created many lifelike women in his writings, yet "never another who wins the affection of the reader as does Natasha" (27).

However, notwithstanding Tolstoy's marvellous art of characterisation, elaborated above, his magnum opus does suffer, according to Maugham, from the author's lack of interest in his characters due to the failure in his vigour and enthusiasm towards the close of the book. This is evident in Tolstoy's indulgence in describing, in detail, Pierre's adventure into Freemasonary which makes the narrative tedious and almost unreadable. But then Maugham offers a plausible reason of it which is difficult to set aside; he asserts that it is but natural in the case of a work which is very voluminous and was completed in more than six years after seven revisions: "In so long a book as *War and Peace*, and one that took so long to write, it is inevitable that the author's verve should sometimes fail him" (27-8).

In addition to powerful imagination and keen observation, what makes Tolstoy's books so fascinating is his ability to put himself in the shoes of the characters of his invention. Inspite of his strong, idiosyncratic personality, he indubitably possesses the rare Shakespearean, Protean quality; the extrovert in him most of the time overshadows the introvert. Natasha, Pierre, Prince Andrew, Nicholas Rostov, Anna Karenina and others bear witness to it. He can clearly be seen rejoicing in their joys, and suffering with them in their sorrows, and thus becoming one with them. Also, Tolstoy is simply outstanding because of his amazing inventiveness transcending imitation, for, Maugham believes, "Great writers create; writers of smaller gifts copy" (*A Writer's Notebook* 147).

True, much of Tolstoy's greatness as a creative writer, like many others, rests on the fact that he artistically records in his works the sublimation of his repressed instincts and daydreams. This undoubtedly leads him to indulge in the adoration of man of action. In the eminent Russian's creative writings, particularly in ihs monumental work, *War and Peace*, this patent feature of the great genius is amply evident in the delineation of major characters and their thoughts and actions. Pierre, Natasha, Prince Andrew and others exemplify it. Tolstoy's repressed, unfulfilled sex desires, spiritual quests, renunciation of the world, etc. find an eloquent articulation in his unique book. Apropos of this generalisation about great art-

ists, Maugham observes:

> Every creative writer's work is, to some extent at least, a sublimation of instincts, desires, daydreams, call them what you like, which for one cause or another he has repressed, and by giving them literary expression he is freed of the compulsion to give them the further release of action. But it is not a complete satisfaction. He is left with a feeling of inadequacy. That is the ground of the man of letters, glorification of the man of action and the unwilling, envious admiration with which he regards him. ("Leo Tolstoy and *War and Peace*," *The World's Ten Greatest Novels* 45)

Besides, Tolstoy's works have "the intimacy, the broad human touch and the animal serenity which the greatest writers alone can give" (*The Summing Up* 77).

Somerset Maugham makes a perceptive observation about *Anna Karenina*, which was written in 1870s, years after *War and Peace* had gained popularity, and which is considered by many greater than a work of art because it is, in Matthew Arnold's opinion, "a piece of life. A piece of life it is" (*Essays in Criticism*, Second Series 152). Maugham first read it while he was just a boy and so he remembered it only vaguely when he got interested in it and re-read it as a practising fictionist interested in the art of fiction. On his perusal of it from a professional point of view around the year 1917, he found it "powerful and strange, but a little hard and dry" (*A Writer's Notebook* 143). While Matthew Arnold, much before him, was deeply impressed by its realistic presentation of life and usually it has been lauded wholeheartedly by most of the people for its insightful thematic treatment and formal excellence, Maugham holds a different view; he finds it powerful and uniquely original in its delineation of life, but "hard and dry" and hence, by implication, much inferior to *War and Peace*, *Crime and Punishment* by Dostoevsky and the notable books by Turgenev.

Perhaps Maugham has never been as precise, pointed and incisive in his critical comments as in those related to Tolstoy's last full-length novel, *The Resurrection*, completed in 1889. Maugham begins his criticism of it on a negative note; he avers that this book owes its reputation to its author's established fame, for the moral intention eclipses the artistic side, reducing it to a moral tract. About this, he makes an entry in his Notebook in 1917: "The moral pur-

pose has obscured the art, and it is a tract rather than a novel. The scenes in prison, the account of the convicts' journey to Siberia, give the unfortunate impression of having been mugged up for the occasion..." (160). But then Maugham states that as Tolstoy was endowed with extraordinary gifts of an artist, so even this weak book due to its moral propaganda is conspicuous for some rare artistic virtues: it is studded with realistic and poetic effects of nature, "the scents of the country night, the heat of midday and the mystery of dawn" (160). In addition, the novel is remarkable for its art of characterisation, and Achludof is Tolstoy's wonderful creation whose sensuality, mysticism, sentimentality, ineffectualness, timidity, obstinacy and muddleheadedness make him "a type in which most Russians can recognise themselves" (160). But what is especially remarkable about this novel from the technical point of view, in Maugham's opinion which is sound and incontestable, is the wonderful portrayal of minor characters, several of whom are painted lifelike with distinct individuality in just a few lines on a single page and in this regard Tolstoy surpasses even Shakespeare, the peerless master of the art of characterisation. Maugham accentuates this astonishing artistic strength of Tolstoy as displayed in *The Resurrection* thus:

> ... the most remarkable thing about the book is the immense gallery of subordinate characters, some of whom appear but on a single page, who are drawn, often in three or four lines, with a distinctness and individuality which any writer must find amazing. Most of the small characters in Shakespeare's plays are not characterised at all: they are merely names with a certain number of lines to say, and actors, who have often an accurate instinct in this matter, will tell you how great an effort it requires to put individuality into such puppets; but Tolstoi gives each man his own life and character. An ingenious commentator might devise the past and suggest the future of the most summarily sketched. (160)

In fact, Tolstoy's creative fertility is prodigious, his subject matter is the whole life of his time and the contemporary civilisation, his knowledge of men and women is vast and realistic, he knows the aristocracy thoroughly and immaculately, he is able to paint the wicked realistically, his observation is precise and pointed, and his invention is stupendous as exhibited by the extraordinarily large

number of characters marked by individual traits showing the 'God's plenty' in his fictional world. However, Maugham does not fail to mark that Tolstoy, like Dostoevsky, writes "Russian very indifferently" and ill (*The World's Ten Greatest Novels* 66). Though a distinguished writer should write "well than badly" (67), but much more important than this are some other qualities which are the hallmark of a genius like that of Tolstoy or Balzac and these qualities are "vigor and vitality, imagination, creative force, observation, knowledge of human nature, with an interest in it and sympathy with it, fertility and intelligence..." (67). These merits also make up for the two factors because of which no novel is said to be perfect — "the natural inadequacy of the form" and "the deficiencies of the human being who writes it" (117). Besides the qualities, mentioned above, what makes the writer to produce a great work of art is the creative instinct combined with personality — the author's idiosyncracy which, in Maugham's view, "enables him to see in a manner peculiar to himself. It may be a pleasant or an unpleasant personality. That does not matter.... The only thing that matters is that he should see with his own eyes, and that his eyes should show him a world peculiar to himself" (233-34). In a word, an outstanding novelist invariably portrays an idiosyncratic interpretation of life, of world, and for this much education is not needed — Tolstoy and Flaubert were not highly educated and yet both were popular and eminent writers. Since Tolstoy's works embody his personal, idiosyncratic and peculiar view of life very effectively and artistically, he is such a great writer.

In the opening chapter of his famous book, *The World's Ten Greatest Novels*, Maugham affirms that no one should look for perfection in a novel because even the best cannot be free from some blemishes, but a novel that occupies a place among the world's greatest of all times should possess certain qualities which he enumerates as follows:

> It should have a widely interesting theme, by which I mean a theme interesting not only to a clique, whether of critics, professors, highbrows, truck drivers or dish washers, but so broadly human that it is interesting to men and women of all sorts.... The story should be coherent and persuasive; it should have a beginning, a middle and an end, and the end

> should be the natural consequence of the beginning. The episodes should have probability and should not only develop the theme, but grow out of the story. The creatures of the novelist's invention should be observed with individuality, and their actions should proceed from their characters; the reader must never be allowed to say: So and so would never behave like that; on the contrary he should be obliged to say: That's exactly how I should have expected So and so to behave. I think it is all the better if the characters are in themselves interesting. (15-6)

Besides highlighting the four essential qualities of a great novel as explained lucidly in the above extract, on the next page of the same book Maugham elucidates four more requisites of an outstanding fictional work in these words:

> The dialogue should neither be desultory nor should it be an occasion for the author to air his opinions; it should serve to characterize the speakers and to advance the story. The narrative passages should be vivid, to the point and no longer than is necessary to make the motives of the persons concerned and the situations in which they are placed clear and convincing. The writing should be simple enough for anyone of ordinary education to read it with ease, and the manner should fit the matter as a well-cut shoe fits a shapely foot. Finally a novel should be entertaining. I have put this last, but it is the essential quality, without which no other quality is of any use. No one in his senses reads a novel for instruction or edification. If he wants instruction or edification he is a fool if he does not go to the books written to instruct and edify. (17)

Then in the "Postscript" on the last page of this very book from which the above two extracts have been cited, Maugham holds that an extraordinay work of art ought to be simply absorbing and more than a temporary, fleeting refreshment by contributing to the soul's self-attainment — its permanent realisation of at least some basic eternal values. Apropos of this, he writes:

> "Human beings require something which absorbs them for a time, something out of the routine which they can stare at. Great art is more than a transient refreshment. It is something which adds to the soul's self-attainment. It justifies itself both by its immediate enjoyment, and also by its discipline of the inmost being. Its discipline is not distinct from enjoyment, but by reason of it. It transforms the soul into the permanent realization of values extending beyond its former self." (240).

The reason why Somerset Maugham considers Tolstoy a very great novelist and his *War and Peace* the best novel of the world so far is that he finds almost all the above-mentioned essential

qualities of a great novel in this book which is amply clear from the foregoing discussion of Tolstoy's mind and art and his major works. He particularly underlines its vast thematic appeal, the epical presentation of life encompassing the whole human world characterised by perennial struggles, aspiratios, ambitions, quests of all kinds, joys and sorrows and what not. Pinpointing the sterling merits of this greatest fictional work till now, Maugham passes his final, irrefutable verdict on it rationally and conclusively thus:

> I think Balzac is the greatest novelist the world has ever known, but I think Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is the greatest novel. No novel with such a wide sweep, dealing with so momentous a period of history and with such a vast array of characters, was ever written before, nor, I surmise, will ever be written again. It has been justly called an epic. I can think of no other work of fiction that could with truth be so described. Strakhov, a friend of Tolstoy's and an able critic, put his opinion into a few energetic sentences: "A complete picture of human life. A complete picture of the Russia of that day. A complete picture of what may be called the history and struggle of peoples. A complete picture of everything in which people find their happiness and greatness, their grief and humiliation. That is *War and Peace.*" (25)

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A PASSAGE TO INDIA: THE ART OF E.M. FORSTER

Leonard R.N. Ashley

Passage to more than India!
Are thy wings plumed indeed for such far flights?
Walt Whitman

Howards End, with its vivid picture (and some real-life dialogue as well as penetrating analysis) of the level of comfortably off upper-middleclass British society E.M. Forster knew so intimately, was an immediate success. It has remained famous, but it can be argued that *A Passage to India* (1924) is his mid-life masterpiece, the cap of his career. It was certainly his last novel because *Maurice*, because of its homosexual subject matter, could not be published in his lifetime although written earlier. It is with India that most people today connect Forster the novelist. It suggests some kind of passage to India that might bring the natives and the *raj* to an understanding of imperial history and, knowing all, forgive all.

P.N. Furbank, his industrious biographer, has all the details of Foster's experience in India. It was an exciting place for Forster but one where his set attitudes toward imperialism, reflected in Forster's contributions to the *New Statesman* and the *Independent*, prepared him to take a stance that would be popular there. A certain Cambridge undergraduate named Masood (the ward of perhaps the most important Muslim in India) convinced Forster that he ought to visit the subcontinent. He first did so in 1912. He got more involved sexually with a Muslim named Mahommed. How people understood or failed to understand others of different race and social class became Forster's stock in trade. Difference fascinated him. As a homosexual it could not be the difference of sex so it for him had to be the difference between a man foreign to his social set or of a different race. If it was to be an Englishman, it was likely to be a married man and certainly one of a lower social class. The power of the older and wiser over the more down-to-earth and lowlier but more emotionally freer, the richer over the poorer but more masculine, was to be exercised in what one of Forster's characters might call an "alarming intimacy". Over the stronger inferior the power of the bottom was to be over the top, not the masculine over the effeminate. His idea

was social unity with space for the individual to reach her or his own potential or his own way.

Forster visited India again in 1921 and it was out of his experience there he wrote about its ancient religion and its modern status, not, he insisted its politics (although there is the prophecy that "we shall drive every blasted Englishman into the sea") but poetically and philosophically, a story about human relationships rather than international relationships. It was a search for his own English (well, partly Welsh) soul in a strange environment far from the home counties' suburban placidity.

He asserted that the three sections of Mosque, Caves, and Temple of *A Passage to India* reflect "three seasons of the Cold Weather, the Hot Weather, and the Rains" which White (p. 644) elaborates into a shaky "Hegelian Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis". The critics have been busy at Forster, especially rummaging in private papers for biographical tidbits, and some of the critics will be listed in the bibliography here. If you should read them, you will find much that is trivial, some things that are illuminating, nothing really that you ought to substitute for reading Forster's work over and over. The critics seem always to be drawn to the thought rather than the story, the relationships so subtly limned, the people and power that he brought to life in *A Passage to India.* They search the diaries and letters of Forster's life for the seeds and the meaning of the novel more than they read it for itself.

The critics must not accuse Forster of going to India to find a subject for a novel. He went for a job. He served as secretary to the Maharajah of Dewas. Forster's homosexual life, which had begun with a man named Mohammed in Egypt in 1915 or so, took a new turn in that gay and gossipy court. Believing that he must always be honest with people, Forster confessed to his employer that he was one of the numerous homosexuals in the maharajah's employ and that he crossed class barriers. He expected to be sacked, but the maharajah appreciated his straightforwardness. On the surface, in the court, where backbiting was always rife, appearances had to be maintained. The difference between appearance and reality always engaged Forster's imagination and it was, in fact, the heart of

A Passage to India along with themes of self-worth and self-knowledge in the face of snubbing and secularism, the gulf between civilizations, even untouchables.

That despite the fact that it is, at least to critics such as Richard Church (p. 64), "sensitive and over-nervously wrought" (he counts Forster and Virginia Woolf in that group and uses the word *exquisite*). Church claims it not to be grouped with the "massive and masculine novels which present the world as it *is,* and not as it is apprehended by a certain personality". I suppose he is looking backward to eighteenth-century novelists but if "a certain personality" does not describe Fielding and Sterne and many others of that era in literature I do not know what does.

A Passage to India is a magisterial work of fiction, not reportage, and while critics are entitled to worry its metaphysical symbolism and its unusual structure, if they like, and symbol search, they may be on the wrong track. The critics not of flourishes but of fact, how India is presented, are way off the mark, central as India is to the story as England, which Trilling says is what the house stands for, is in *Howards End.* But there is nothing so central as the great river in *Huckleberry Finn* or the great whale in *Moby-Dick.* Foster is more subtle than that in *A Passage to India,* unless we say India herself is the great Other.

Symbolism in *A Passage to India*, from the nation as a whole as it is to the nation on the way to the freedom that Mahatma Gandhi (emerging in the 'twenties) will bring, may be more underhanded (certainly not too heavy-handed) for some people and others may miss it entirely because of the fact that reading symbols often requires a familiarity with convention and there is less agreed upon material in the modern multicultural and divided world lacking in what colleges might call a core curriculum. Macaulay (p. 198) was quick to see in *A Passage to India* "a remarkably well-built tale, with significant approach, tense suspense, highly dramatic crisis, brilliantly narrated denouement, and fine close". Soon critics such as Beer, however, began to ask what is meant by *fine,* excellent and appropriate but maybe not final. If Adela Quested's quest and the problem with Dr. Aziz end with stating that Dr. Aziz did nothing

wrong, and everything is as is, why does the story not end there, everyone having had their necessary experience and vision, everything having come to a state of stasis, even if, in the press of the crowd after Dr. Aziz is exonerated, Cecil Fielding through no fault of his own cannot join the doctor's triumphant procession and their relationship receives an irreversible blow? The Englishman will marry an English woman. The end of Fielding's close friendship with an Indian will thereby be made the more obvious. The novel may by its coda be unusual in structure but today it looks rather tame in that respect after experimental fiction has gone well beyond stream of consciousness to cinematic quick cuts, television series which seem to be six or eight different stories all related by a law firm, advertising agency, hospital or newsroom but with the pages of the scripts shuffled and the characters suddenly appearing or disappearing. What is so chaotic in popular media becomes even more challenging in the art novel. Think of Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (which some of us think out Joyces Joyce in a number of ways) or *Vineland* ("acid adventures" in which "everything connects" and also "nothing is connected to anything").

Actually, the place is beautifully evoked in its essence. Details of place are not all that significant, nonetheless; it is the relationships between the characters from sensitive women to India hands who say "Here we are and the country's got to put up with us, gods or no gods" and that the interlopers intend to "stop". By that in Foster's language "stop" was in the British sense of "stay," as in stopping at a hotel. At that time few Britons imagined that the *raj* would "stop" in the sense of terminate, cease to exist. Even for lay-it-on-the-line British novelists such as Aldous Huxley and George Orwell and today's Matt Beaumont I have had to write to explain to American speakers what certain British passages mean—in point of fact, actually, as Brits say. With Forster there is little of that problem, though he was fond of slang in his diaries and casual conversations. With Foster it is a matter of getting into a Briton's suit, as it were, which for all his effort T. S. Eliot never quite managed to accomplish. Every nation has its *mentalité*, as the French say. *A Passage to India* involves several mindsets colored by circum-

stances and country of origin.

A Passage to India is fiction of a high sort about something much bigger than countries and yet it is spare, not some Tudor extravagance like a goose stuffed with other fowls. It attempts to examine the soul. It offers India as Conrad's "destructive element" and English characters like Lord Jim in that their ideas and ideals simply do not fit in the East. It offers insight into human behavior at all times and places and that gives the work its lasting importance. It reaches its high point in the fourteenth chapter with the mature Englishwoman Mrs. Moore's sudden, unnerving intuition of the meaninglessness of life. (The cynic will think of the old Music Hall song "Don't Have Any More Mrs. Moore" but the sensitive reader will be stunned by Forster's psychological profundity). She comes to it rather like the blind who, science now tells us, have blindsight in the unconscious and without seeing can navigate the world.

Forster had to discuss the metaphysical in terms of particular persons at a certain time and place. He was as always something of an outsider but was using principally not "orientals" but solid English women and them he knew well. If he somewhat failed, as he once said was his intention, to make Dr. Aziz "attractive," that was just another result of outsiderness. In fact, the English writer can never fully read the Indian's inner thoughts and may, as a matter of fact, failed to describe accurately his reaction when Anglos snub him. It was something a little bit different than what an Englishman would feel if insulted at his club.

Forster's women are his best characters. He was very close to no woman but his mother, but he did learn a lot at least of a certain class of woman from a contingent of female relatives, from that mother to whom he remained devoted all her life (she died at 90, when Forster was 66) to the aunts and cousins and confidants who were so much a part of his long life. He also, like some gay men, had close friends among women with whom he shared gossip but not beds. Given his limitations in regard to sex, his understanding of English women is amazing, far above Virginia Woolf's understanding of men or Hemingway's of women. His characters are very much of a lost pre-War England, rather prim and puritanical, liberal

and desiring to be well-meaning, and occasionally flighty or even eccentric, firmly rooted in a late Victorian world, or, if you will, in the two Victorian worlds of which Disraeli wrote, the wealthy and the poor. In a sense they were actually outsiders even at home in the changed world of the 'twenties just as Forster himself was an outsider in his sexuality and his academic cloister at Cambridge among what a satiric poet was to call "remote and ineffectual dons". Still, Forster escapes the nineteenth-century English focus on the class system and the historic Indian caste system to get to something more subtle than Tolstoy or Turgenev, Trollope or even George Eliot, something that plays a larger part in life than social advancement and money or the lack of it does in Balzac or Dickens. To a surprising extent, the unexpected conclusion of *A Passage to India* avoids the tragic note about the human condition sounded in the work of Hardy and Conrad and also the hectic reaction to tragedy found in the Roaring 'Twenties when many Bright Young Things were blinding themselves deliberately to the truth of Coward's "the party's over now," to what an intellectual like Valéry said in 1922 to a writers' conference held in Zurich:

> The storm has died away, and still we are uneasy as if the storm were about to break. Almost all the affairs of men remain in a terrible uncertainty....We do not know what will be born and we fear the future not without reason.... Doubt and disorder are in us and with us. There is no thinking man who can hope to put down this anxiety, to escape from the impression of darkness, to measure the probable duration of this period when the vital relation ships of humanity are profoundly disturbed.

As we read Valéry in the twenty-first century a feeling that it was ever thus may come over us but as we read *A Passage to India* an almost indefinable sense of the possibilities of humanity can be felt, a more uplifting and optimistic word about human relationships. We must not judge *A Passage to India* as whistling in the dark and certainly never as a reliable travelogue or as a political statement about imperialists concerned with colonials and religions and classes that do not respect each other enough or understand enough, not even about a fairly young civilization (British) clashing with a very much older one (Indian).

Margaret Ganz in a chapter on "The Humorist's Vision" warned

us (p. 132) in connection with another novelist with some few connections with Forster I do not have inclination or space here to adumbrate that: "Although Mrs. Gaskell certainly contributed to the understanding of social problems, her genuine artistic achievement is not her sympathetic exploration of industrial conflicts but her humorous appraisal of the whimsies and foibles of small-town life". Forster is no Dickens but was compared by Samuel C. Chew in Baugh's *Literary History of England* (p. 1569) with both Henry James and George Gissing. If all this name dropping were not so annoying to readers we could add George Meredith and Samuel Butler and a few more connections with Forster. I do not know what you think of the Great Tradition so sold and oversold by the British in the last century but I know you must agree that writers write as it were in the presence of all earlier writers of importance and Forster, so well read himself, was especially open to influence. When it comes to influence, other critics have compared Forster with D. H. Lawrence or *vice versa,* while the sudden outbreaks of stunning violence that interrupt the usual Forster flow open the doors wide to modern fiction, drama, films, television and electronic games where violence is so much more in evidence and Forster's deep thought is so patently lacking.

The politics of literary criticism these days needs mention also because of late criticism has narrowed down to certain single-issue agendas and critics do read novels closely but only certain modern novels and those not only as if written in the light of nothing but the critics' personal partisan creed. Critics who are widely read over time and genres are thin on the ground but for the fullest understanding of a text we must have the broad context, not the passing party line, and we must be able to place the writer, however original, in the whole history of the appropriate literature, whether it be politically correct or not by current standards and compare and contrast the writer with others who have toiled or are now toiling in the same vineyards, domestic and foreign. The popular tendency now to read literature for or, worse, with a political agenda should never be applied to Forster's *A Passage to India,* for general conditions of natives and foreigners in India are not its subject. Being fair and

balanced, however, once you have objectively examined precisely what Forster has put into the work himself you can compare Anglo and Indian relations now and then, the tension between Muslims and Hindus now, and the incredible unintended consequences of religious disagreements in today's world, but you must remember that Forster did not have today's circumstances in mind when he wrote. But all the best of all of these, though it is now old-fashioned to say so in this time when in literary theory has replaced moral instruction, readers learn how to live their lives. Nor should we look in Forster for the angry, embittered moral sense that informs the bitter satires of Waugh or the Amises. Forster's subject lies deep in the permanent human condition, not any national condition, and about none of it is he in dire despair. He is essentially dedicated, with all the motifs and subtleties always seeking clarity, to sound argument. This is a result we may say of his membership while at Cambridge in the Apostles. They were a select group that insisted on argument being lucid and irrefutable, all its elements soundly arrived at and perfectly ordered in the mind, clear in presentation.

Forster's work may ask much of the reader, for modern fiction often is far more difficult than older fiction. Unlike many hard to read modern works, however, Foster's hold the promise that it is worth the trouble and that something definite is intended by the writer. If you do connect the dots there will be a picture. This even though, as reception theory now tells us, the author's work is remade in the mind of the reader. The effect can be compared to a shout in a large chamber, the echoes being determined not only by the original voice but what we may call the acoustics of the mind that receives and contemplates the declaration. The message of the author, who now fashionably is said to be dead to this Me generation, is altered by the individual receiver.

Besides message, there is manner. There is in *A Passage to India* an ingenious departure from what Percy Lubbock thought to be the be-all and the end-all, "the relation in which the narrator stands to the story," for there the intellectual content is far more crucial than dazzling novelistic technique or architectonics by Thomas Mann or snail-horn perceptiveness of detail as in Proust or dazzling lan-

guage juggling as in Joyce. In fact, Forster overcomes any conventional inadequacies of style by having a firm grip on the truth as he sees it and he has the ability to stick to that in writing (for which Norman Mailer hailed him as an inspiration), without any Mailer show-off braggadocio or bombast. There is with all the nuance just reliable and accessible profundity of content. Kipling is probably the English (well, half-English) writer of Forster's era, or thereabouts, that knew India better, but Kipling is too pro-imperialist (or too British-imperialist rather than American-imperialist) for now, and sentimental and sensational to boot. Kipling's characters are action figures. His novels are efficient but predictable. They can be played easily by movie stars who work in a visual medium that can get right past the rational mind to the unconscious (as science says both images and even odors can do). We have seen on the big and small screens that embodying the characters that Forster created is still not easy. Forster's personal favorite among his novels, *The Longest Journey,* has not been filmed but we have had *A Passage to India* (1984, with Judy Davis, Sir Alec Guinness, Dame Peggy Ashcroft), *A Room with a View* (1985, with Maggie Smith, Daniel Day Lewis, Helena Bonham Carter), *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1991, with Helen Mirren, Rupert Graves, Helena Bonham Carter), and *Howards End* (Emma Thompson, Sir Anthony Hopkins, Helena Bonham Carter). Often the settings are perfectly correct (a Merchant Ivory specialty) but the acting even of famous names in this or that performance, may be pedestrian. Reviewers of the West End and Broadway plays, however, which you can look up, no more than the writers of scholarly articles, which are omitted from the bibliography here (such as Gertrude M. White on the novel in *PMLA* 68, 1953) and can be easily found online in the MLA Bibliography etc., make anything important of the fact that it seems especially difficult for modern actors to capture the look of people of the 'twenties or even, considering social levels from which actors come, many of the characters of that period that Forster has created.

They all suffer, it must be admitted, from the fact that very often Forster's dialogue, like Hemingway's, is written to be read and when spoken aloud seems to be a trifle artificial. Forster does not

appear to have tried his dialogue aloud the way Dickens did, performing before a mirror in his study, playing all the roles. Forster (1879 – 1970) was a writer at his desk, committed to the printed word, of which he wrote many. He was not recognizable in public as the man who could write in quick succession. Perhaps he was social climbing by adopted his own version of what Len Deighton (p. 46) called "slightly unkempt, with that well worn appearance that the British upper class cultivate to show they are not *nouveau riche*". Foster was generally shy and withdrawn but he could flare up in anger in debate. In literature we make more demands upon appearance and even credibility of incident than we do, or can, make in real life. Movies particularly usually must look far more real than real life to us.

All this about films may surprise some readers, especially those who are unaware of the thriving Shakespeare on Film industry both cinematic and critical. But it is through film that Forster is best known to the general public. The questions of mass appeal and the literalness of photography govern how Forster's work is usually seen, on big and small screens and (because reading has declined) by fewer booklovers, who read novels running movies in their imaginations. People have been trained by the visual media to look for realism to such an extent that they question so-called memoirs by Margaret Seltzer and James Frey and look for facts rather than fiction in a number of novelists. Criticism digs into real-life origins of novelistic details, seeming to prefer reportage or, better, gossip. Autobiographical revelations are valued as much or more than fictional inventions. Criticism wants to know which part of the literary art is "made up" even in an age of wildly un-representational visual art. It wants to see the author's credentials. It seeks the real-life model for Joyce Cary's artist in *The Horse's Mouth*. Critics search Maugham's notebooks for the sources of his plots. Did any of the events of *A Passage to India* actually occur? The public of today says with its check-out-counter tabloid predilections, "Enquiring minds want to know".

Forster is a sensitive, imaginative writer, above his material; he is not a Tom Wolfe reporter on the scene. Forster "makes it up"

to illustrate insights and themes and for all his speed in writing he is meticulous and honest in construction. It may be as Frederick Karl & Marvin Magalaner state in their introduction (p. 27) that he is one of the writers who have decided to go well beyond reportage and "proceed by motifs and recurrent themes, [so that] one loses entire sequences if he (read: one, Americans ought not to try the U one thing) is not completely alert to what the novelist is doing". Foster at least never has to include masses of authenticating and sometimes tiresome factoids or to impose some kind of arty monumental myth on the mess of potage, as Joyce was forced to do and with all his obsession could not achieve with completely accessible success. Forster in real life was nowhere near as deft as he was when writing fiction. He may have tended to drop tea trays and occasionally bump into things, be a duffer at schoolboy sports, and be careless in his personal appearance. He could, however, play the piano with accuracy and style and he could write incisively to friends as well as to the public. He was in writing even more than in his personal life tightly in control; he knew what he was about, unlike some writers who as they work are not certain where they are headed. He is always on message (as Americans say today) even when he puts an episode such as a festival or Hindu temple as a "lump" or creates some other hurdle for critics to get over. And he writes for readers, not (an unfortunate aspect of much modern fiction) for critics or other writers.

D.H. Lawrence and Lytton Strachey and others in the Bloomsbury set were dismissive of him, partly because they could not detect what Pope would call "art, not chance" in his writing's hard-won "true ease". Tennessee Williams refused to go with Gore Vidal to meet him, saying he did not like to meet old men with pee stains on their trousers. "Katherine Mansfield," who wrote excellent short stories (though few if any as famous as Forster's "The Celestial Omnibus") but couldn't handle a novel said Forster knew how to warm the teapot but "there was no tea". Wrong. Professionals should have noticed his smart touches. Some are bold: two friends who will because of race never really get along have to divide as they ride along because large and immovable rocks are in the way. Driving

in the country, people find their car nearly wrecked by some mysterious thing, perhaps an animal, who knows? When Mrs. Moore threatens by her testimony to assist Dr. Aziz at trial her son has her shipped off and when Ronald Heaslop's mother threatens to support Dr. Aziz's innocence she too is sent away. Such are these people's ideas of the superior British justice that occupation is supposed to be bringing to what Kipling would call poor benighted heathens. Even in the twentieth century their past dominated the British. The past, as Faulkner said, is never past and after the death of Mrs. Moore she lives on in the people she has touched.

The vaguely mystical and the stolid British attitudes are both presented in their good and bad aspects. Forster is even-handed but cannot get around his basic conviction that real closeness between two races is quite impossible, maybe as a truly intimate relationship between homosexual and heterosexual men may be, no matter what romantics might want us to believe. Forster believed you must examine and then believe and then be brave enough to say what you really believe.

Forster deserves accolades for his honesty and to be applauded for his confident art because he is not dully didactic and he does not intrude and twist the arms of Dear Reader as writers such as Henry James used to do. Forster has Jamesian ideas and insights of his own and works no less on the reader but he is sly, roundabout, and yet fully succeeds with bold strokes in the portrayal of Anglos and Indians on opposite sides of a party. He does not feel so uninformed about his central characters that he has to use a narrator as buffer as Fitzgerald does in *The Great Gatsby*. Forster does not need a Marlow that Conrad employed in telling the story second-hand because of the death of the central character in *Lord Jim,* a narrative in which episodes had to be seen from outside and in meticulously reorganized "dis"order. Forster does not need a number of narrators to triangulate truth (as Wilkie Collins did in the groundbreaking detective story of *The Moonston*) nor the heavy machinery Thomas Mann had to employ to tackle history and philosophy in *The Magic Mountain.* Forster never deals in crude caricatures or incredible coincidences nor does he play arty tricks or

tack on an inartistic happy ending because the public likes them. The single word to describe his complex fiction is *honesty.* That is a quality not often found in British and American fiction outside of satire. He is, to employ an American phrase not typical of the British approach to life, "telling it like it is," in a quiet and almost diffident voice unusual among those who boast authenticity and engagement with reality. At the same time Forster is beyond what Eugene O'Neill called "the banality of surfaces". Forster deals in the way things really are, in essence and always and everywhere. The experiences of some people in one country at a certain time are expanded to refer to everyone everywhere.

At the same time, his characters and settings and actions are specific and credible, not found and recorded but imagined and analyzed so as to be truer than actuality, Picasso's art that is "truer than true," "a lie about the truth" that may startle but completely inform. It must be vivid to strike deep. Like his close contemporary and admirer Conrad, Forster wants you to *see* exactly what he is talking about and then grasp the significance. He wants you to experience the action, breathe the atmosphere and register something unusual: whatever is invisible, the interaction between the inner and outer lives of people. The reader has too often become Dickens' Gradgrind: "Facts alone are what is wanted in life". Yes, but facts about truly important things, even theology and not technology, human relationships and not just business are most important of all. Those are kind of facts that *A Passage to India* offers. Forster is extraordinarily serious in the age of Berryism created by "Dornford Yates" (Cecil William Mercer, 1885 – 1960) in his slight, escapist novels of the flapper period. In the US in the year *A Passage to India* won both the Tait Black and Femina Vie Heureuse prizes Margaret Wilson won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction with *The Able McLaughlins,* though admittedly Willa Cather won the previous year and Edna Ferber the year afterwards.

Forster wants you to understand not merely cultural watersheds but enduring human mental and moral actions. He insists that the reader who is one whom, as James says, "on whom nothing I lost". He wants that reader to be equipped to see and appreciate how

epiphanies somehow come to certain individuals whatever the setting and whatever their backgrounds or circumstances. For that the reader stays with the story, and afterwards the story stays with her or him. With all the particular bright scenery, this novel's dark caves, like the cave in which Odysseus encountered the Cyclops, direct us to the dark recesses of the universal human heart and draw our attention to secret sources of knowledge within us and even comprehend the determination to live and love and learn of all humanity.

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ALDOUS HUXLEY'S LITERARY AND SPIRITUAL ODYSSEY: FROM EURO-ENGLISH TO INDO-EASTERN SHORES VIA AMERICA

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Aldous Huxley acquires a unique position both as a modernist writer and a thinker in the Western literary and intellectual traditions. The writer and thinker in him move forward in tune with each other till the end. His thought finds aesthetic representation in a work of art as essay, the novel, biography and at times in philosophical treatises as in *Ends and Means* (1937), *Perennial Philosophy* (1945), etc. In Huxley's case we find a typical characteristic of unmistakably close correspondence between the two genres of the novel and essay with regard to the form and content . They cut across each other in the novel and biography distinctively in the later phase beginning with *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936). This trend makes it formidable to decide whether Huxley is preeminently an artist or a thinker. Huxley is equally serious about both his art and thought. However, he makes art a vehicle of his thought and his thought pertains to the welfare of suffering humanity in a period of unprecedented and violent disintegration of life, tradition and values. Thus Huxley's art, like his thought, has a salvationist role. At long last, thanks to the current critical concensus, Huxley is acknowledged as a major novelist and his position as an essayist of stature has remained assured in the English cannon of essay writing from the very beginning.

Huxley's career as writer and thinker is marked by a continuous process of evolution, growth and change, maintaining all along an integrated linear progression characterized by shifting emphasis from cynicism, Phyrronist satire and scepticism to pacifism, meditation, metaphysics and mysticism along with a continuous undercurrent of his natural innate sense of irony and scepticism with regard to the fundamental bases of his evergrowing world-view. Another important aspect in Huxley's life and career is that it is divided into two phases as European and American Huxleys both in space and mind (thought). In 1937 Huxley moved to California and lived there

till the end of his life in 1963.

Huxley is an artist and thinker with a mission and a purpose. His achievement on the plane of art as well as thought has always been a subject of serious critical attention. The early decades of the 20th century were the period of great cataclysmic changes and unprecedented disintegration of life and values. The holocaust of the first global war projected 'an immense panorama of anarchy and futility' and generated in the western man an acute sense of bewilderment and lassitude. This dismal human situation had strong impact on Huxley and made him concerned about the future of mankind from the early period of his literary career. The author got engaged in search of a positive vision of life as a way out of the present predicament. This search was painful, making imperative for Huxley to harness all his intellectual and psychic potentialities. It was in his relentless intellectual and psychic odyssey that Huxley got his acquaintances with the Indian thought. Vedanta and Buddhism exerted probably the greatest influence on him and became ultimately the core of his "Perennial Philosophy".

From the point of view of philosophy, there is clear distinction between the early and the later Huxley. The cynical and satirical Huxley of the early phase grows into a mystic in the later part, though remaining at the same time sceptical about western man's approval of his philosophy of life (Island). In the early novels the writer is deeply concerned with the crucial chasm in the inner being of man. Almost all his major and minor characters are men of 'split-personality'. There is a profound gulf between their thought and action. This disintegration of personality has reached such a stage that men and women find themselves in perpetual torment for their inability to live up to the ideals they consider wholesome for their existence. It is at this stage that the relevance of Indian wisdom begins to impinge on the mind of the spiritual thinker. Calamy, the hero of *Those Barren Leaves* (1925), retires, at the end of the novel, to a mountain retreat in search of a solution for the distracted human life through meditation. In this sense he is an advanced version of the earlier heroes, Denis Stones and Gumbril junior of *Crome Yellow* (1921) and *Antic Hay* (1923) respectively. However, Huxley

is yet to develop into a confirmed and ardent believer in mysticism for the salvationist purpose. He continues to remain deeply cynical and a Phyrronist satirist. During this phase Huxley is equally significant as an artist. His bold experimentation with the form of the novel as 'the novel of ideas' and musical pattern to embody the contrapuntal human situations and points of view makes him a prominent figure among the modernist novelists of his time. He is profound and provocative as thinker as well as conscious artist-novelist. *Point Counter Point* (1928) is the crowning achievement of this phase both in form and content. Here there is no mysticism but instead a kind of integration and wholeness of human personality on spiritual and physical planes is devised and embodied in the character of Mark Rampion under the strong influence of D.H. Lawrence. This suggests his fervid search for a positive philosophy of life to restore unity and integration in the gloomy stage of 'fracture', disintegration and aimless drift of man witnessed never before in the history of western civilization. From the point of view of art *Point Counter Point* represents a supreme example of the novel of ideas, contrapuntal pattern/ structure and musicalization of fiction. Huxley is in his full force as cynical satirist with an extraordinary imaginative foresight and insight into the future in his dystopian novel *Brave New World* (1932). This novel represents the darkest phase in Huxley's odyssey as a thinker when he makes the Savage, who represents the ages old tradition and human civilization with Shakespeare and the Bible as its asset, commit suicide. The book represents the final doom of the previous civilization which we do not find even in *Ape and Essence* because of its ending on a positive note of the noble sentiment of love between Dr. Poole and Loola. The narrator says that Love, Joy and Peace are the fruits of the spirit that is man's essence and the essence of the world. As a work of art *Brave New World* is one of the best examples of the dystopian novel written in the typical Huxleyan fictional artifice.

Huxley had already drunk deep at the fountain of Eastern wisdom by the time he wrote *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936), although he had yet to develop deeper insights into it and experience some fresh nuances through practice during his American period. *Eyeless in Gaza*

gives expression to Huxley's belief in spiritual values. He also suggests through the character of Anthony Beavis that man, inspite of his frailties, is capable of attaining great spiritual heights. By the time Huxley wrote *Eyeless in Gaza* he had developed the conviction that a life of restraint and dedication to moral causes was the only means of escape from spiritual degeneration. This new turn in Huxley's career as a moral thinker was by no means sudden and unforeseen. It was rather the outcome of his persistent effort to evolve a positive philosophy of life. *Eyeless in Gaza*, thus, is remarkable as a signpost in Huxley's growth as a thinker. Before conversion, Anthony Beavis is a thorough hedonist, an irresponsible cynic and a believer in life of riotous freedom. He feels sceptical about religion and the elaborate code of ethics that goes with it. in the course of the novel Anthony comes in contact with characters having positive vision of life. First, he meets Brian Foxe who has imbibed his faith in God and radical Christianity from his mother. Then he comes in touch with Staithes in Mexico where he meets also his final liberator, Miller. Under their positive influence Anthony undergoes a process of metamorphosis. He becomes a thorough mystic and has faith in Divine Ground. his following experience in a fit of spiritual intoxication is a clear evidence of the impact of the Vedanta on him:

> I am not my body, I am not my sensations, I am not even my mind; I am that ! am. i am *Om* that I *Om*. The sacred word Om represents Him. God is not limited by time. For the one is not absent from anything, and yet is separated from all thing....[1]

This is what Anthony wants to attain as a mystic in the last phase of spiritual transformation. Under Miller's tutelage Anthony learns Buddhism and receives spiritual lessons to enter the realms of meditation. He carries on his meditation with devotion and commitment and is able ultimately to annihilate the "I" (ego) in him and realizes 'The Peace which passeth understanding.' This is really the moment of liberation for Anthony. Huxley's salvationist search has been ceaseless. What is suggested through Calamy in *Those Barren Leaves* is achieved though Anthony in *Eyeless in Gaza*. The converted Anthony finds a way of salvation through "positive paci-

fism" and "contemplative mysticism". *Eyeless in Gaza* is a landmark in Huxley's long process of experimentation with the technique of the novel. There is nothing in this novel of the houseparty method or the technique of the discussion novel which the author had used in his earlier works. On the contrary, we find here the use of diary, besides long expository passages for an emphatic presentation of the writer's opinion. The change in Huxley as thinker corresponds with the change in Huxley as artist. From the point of view of technique he begins to harness his talent as an essayist in the framework of the novel under aesthetic expediency. Huxley's theme in *Eyeless in Gaza* is an adequate justification for the technique used by him. It may be devoid of dramatic intensity; but it is by no means a static novel. There is a dynamic growth in the character of Anthony and the story moves perceptibly and consistently from one significant point in his career to another. *Eyeless in Gaza* is, thus, a landmark in Huxley's odyssey both as thinker and artist.

Eyeless in Gaza was published in 1936 and Huxley went to America with Maria in April 1937 and settled in California for the rest of his life. A serious study of Huxley's life and career as thinker and artist reveals that the American period has significant shaping influence on the mind and art of Huxley. Some critics and biographers acknowledge this fact; but it requires further serious and systematic exploration. In his salvationist search he had reached a significant stage in *Eyeless in Gaza.* But after American experience he went whole hog into Indian thought, mysticism, meditation and salvationist methods with of course his sceptical nature. He did not think of any other alternative except the Indian one based on Vedanta and Buddhism. It would suffice to quote only one scholar in this context. Wilhelm Halbfass writes:

> Huxley's attitude towards India changed, and his fascination with Indian thought grew, after he had moved to California, more or less permanently, in 1937. Here he was, together with his compatriots and friends Gerald Heard and Christopher Isherwood, a disciple of Swami Prabhavananda, head of the Ramkrishna Mission at Hollywood; among his friends and acquaintances, we also find Jiddu Krishnamurti. After the war, Alan Watts, one of the most successful popularizers of Zen Buddhism and Eastern thought in general, joined the circle. The information and instruction about

> Indian thought which Huxley received in California was very much oriented towards the *Upanishads*, Sankara's Vedanta and Mahayana Buddhism. More precisely, his initiation into Hinduism was an initiation into Neo-Hinduism as represented by the founder of the Ramkrishna Mission, Swami Vivekananda.

He further adds while referring to his experiments with psychedelic drugs:

> ... Huxley's study of, and positive fascination with, Indian thought began much later than his interest in mysticism on the one hand and psychedelic drugs on the other. His Asian travelogue of 1926, *Jesting Pilate,* already associates mysticism and drugs, but makes no specific reference to India in this connection. In a significant and serious fashion, Huxley started turning to Indian thought and Indian forms of mysticism after he had moved to California in 1937. In *The Perennial Philosophy* (1946), indian (and other Asian) sources play a very substantial part. In his last novel *Island* (1962), Huxley speaks of "liberation" in an Indian sense and paraphrases it as "the ending of sorrow, ceasing to be what you ignorantly think you are and becoming what you are in fact." To which he adds, "For a little while, thanks to the *moksha*-medicine, you will know what it's like to be what in fact you are, what in fact you always have been." In a sense, this is his final word on the correlation and concordance of the study of Indian thought, specially Vedantic thought and the use of psychedelic drugs.[3]

Huxley was certainly able to have some very relevant new insights into Indian philosophy — Vedanta and Buddhism — during his American period. The major figures in this regard were Swami Prabhavananda and Jiddu Krishnamurti. Huxley by this time had become more committed and active with his concern about the salvation of humanity at large and not confined only to the salvation of an individual. At the same time inspite of his innate sense of scepticism he was almost sure that only the Indian mysticism combined with Vedantic and Buddhistic methods of meditation can lead to the state of God-realization through transcendence of the physical world and body, the state of Liberation or *Moksha*. This faith was final and marks the end of Huxley's spiritual as well as philosophic journey. This is also his final prophetic vision for the ailing humanity. He experimented with the psychedelic drugs with a view to devising a practical and concrete method to reach the same state of Liberation stated to be possible through the spiritual mysticism. However, he could not succeed in this effort. The Indian

religio-philosophical ambience that he got in America plays tremendous role in regard to Huxley's understanding of the spiritual process which leads towards the final moment of awareness of oneness with the Divine Ground, the moment "which passeth understanding". The main problem in the spiritual quest was the method of meditation to arrive at the state of Liberation or perception of oneness with the God Head which, according to him, should be the supreme goal of every individual and/or society: the true salvation in spiritual terms. Apart from whatever he learned about Indian philosophy from Gerald Heard, he received from Swami Pravanananda and Jiddu Krishnamurti in America something which was not possible from anywhere else under his circumstances. With full faith he had had sessions of meditation under the supervision of Swamiji. But at the same time he did not agree with the ritualistic fact that only a Guru can help realize the Brahman. Inspite of duality if God and an individual are one and the same why can't an individual have the perception of perfect unity without the help of a Guru? Jiddu Krishnamurti confirmed his doubt and vindicated his stand of the realization of God without a Guru. This was Krishnamurti's basic philosophy. He did not believe in rituals and institutionalized religion. During their long talks while walking or sitting in a room they exchanged views and Krishnaji said he believed in pure meditation without any mental predilections till the moment of the final perception of "oneness". He gives his own example. After an experience which lasted for three days in 1922, he wrote: "The fountains of Truth have been revealed to me and the darkness has been dispersed. Love in all its glory has intoxicated my heart; my heart can never be closed. I have drunk at the fountain of Joy and eternal Beauty. I am God-intoxicated."[4] Huxley was fully convinced after meeting Krishnaji that a Guru was not needed to help realize God through meditation and gradually stopped meeting Swami Prabhavananda for the purpose of meditation, unlike his friends Heard and Isherwood. His faith in the possibility of God-realization was unflinching and he continued his pursuit with it.

Huxley's mind and perception find profound expression in the books he wrote during this period: essays, biographies, philosophi-

cal treatises and the novels. *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* (1939) and *Time Must Have a Stop* (1945) illustrate the supreme value of faith in the Absolute that lies behind the flux of life. The central theme of these novels is that time is evil and the true liberation or *mukti* is deliverance into the timeless ground of all being. The "unifying philosophy" in *After Many a Summer* finds expression through Propter who is a man of integrated personality and practises what he preaches. He is almost like the *Sthita-prajna* in the Bhagavad Gita. Propter's unifying philosophy defines man as "a nothingness surrounded by God, indigent and capable of God, filled with God if he so desires."[5] Man is a "nothingness" because his personality is an illusion; and his "all important ego" which prevents him from the realization of God is a "fiction, a kind of nightmare, a frantically agitated nothingness."[6] The ego obstructs spiritual illumination and fosters fear, anxiety, craving, grief and ambition. The ego gives man a consciousness of his separate entity and this is a formidable obstacle in the way of God-realization. Nevertheless, it is within man's power to transcend the limits of this self and achieve identity with the all pervasive divine. In *Time Must Have a Stop* Sebastian Barnack's philosophy is identical with that of Propter's in the preceding novel. The innocent Sebastian passes through the influence of several characters in the novel. He is also convinced ultimately like his predecessors that man is capable of God-realization. He thinks:

> That it is possible for human beings to love, know and, from virtually, to become actually identified with the Ground.
>
> That to achieve this unitive knowledge, to realize this supreme identity, is the final end and purpose of human existence.

These two novels are charged with Indian spiritual and scriptural lore for its profound relevance for Huxley's salvationist venture. The form of these novels has undergone almost a radical change from that of those of the earlier phase retaining of course the contrapuntal structure to deal with the philosophic counterpoint of time and eternity. They are dominated by long exegeses and philosophical passages reminiscent of the essay form, stretching the established form of the novel too far with adroit innovative artistic skill. This was

imperative on Huxley's part to shape the content into the appropriate aesthetic form of the novel. The experiment thus was inevitable. Writing about the form of *Time Must Have a Stop*, the recent brilliant biographer of Huxley Dana Sawyer writes: "*Time Must Have a Stop* was an important novel in Huxley's career.... Because it is the first novel in which his spiritual viewpoint shapes the entire narrative."[8] It would not be out of place to remember at this stage that the ending of Huxley's dark dystopia *Ape and Essence* on a positive/salvationist note in clear contrast with that of *Brave New World* is because of Huxley's salvationist mood in the American period.

Huxley's last novel *Island* (1962) is written in the typical salvationist mood. It represents an ideal world of Utopia where we find man at the best. The novel presents a picture of life completely free from the ills and abnormalities of the modern industrial civilization. It offers an ideal blend of western science and Indian philosophy. The entire structure of the ideal world on the land of Pala is based on the twin concepts of Mahayan Buddhism and Yoga. The Palanese children are trained from the very beginning to realize the supreme truth of *Tat tvam asi* (That thou art). The Palanese people have realized that human personality is a blend of the three *gunas* (*satva, rajas* and *tamas*) as established by the Gita and the dominance of any one particular *guna* determines the individual's temperament. Their thinking is that each person can be prescribed an individual method of yoga to suit his temperamental preference to attain *Nirvana.*

The response of Huxley's reviewers and critics of the novels of this phase was not favourable. They declared almost the end of Huxley's career as novelist after *Point Counter Point. Eyeless in Gaza* stands like a buffer state between the two phases of Huxley's career as novelist and thinker. Huxley was not happy to see the negative criticism of the reviewers novel after novel. But he was not discouraged or disappointed for he was sure about his significant achievement in his calling as thinker-artist with a mission and purpose. Huxley was right in the assessment of his own achievement. Presently in this period of a renaissance in Huxley scholarship after several decades since his passing away his own judgement about

himself is being vindicated. Critics from East and West have now begun to take him seriously as a novelist even during his American period. I want to assert that if James Joyce and Marcel Proust and others of their ilk can stretch the novel form to the farthest extent and remain great novelists of the century, why not Huxley?

Had Huxley not shifted to America, the story might have been different, but even in that case his fascination with Indian as well as Eastern thought might have been a major factor about his thought and art. But is it necessary to indulge in such hypothesis instead of trusting the tale which Huxley's career tells us? We find, therefore, that Aldous Huxley's literary and spiritual odyssey takes its course from Euro-English to indo-Eastern shores via America, a unique example in the history of the twentieth century modernist literature.

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[5]Aldous Huxley, *After Many a Summer* (New York: Avon Publications, 1957), p.66.

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TONI MORRISON'S USE OF THE 'STRIPPING BACK' OF LANGUAGE IN *SONG OF SOLOMON, BELOVED* AND *JAZZ*

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In the present paper, an attempt has been made to look at Toni Morrison's use of the 'stripping back' of language in her three major novels — *Song of Solomon, Beloved* and *Jazz* —, using Julia Kristeva's 'semiotic' as a theoretical tool. Bambara talks about her writing as being concerned with breaking with the past restraints of language and 'trying to break words open and get at the bones' (Toni Cade Bambara, *The Salt Eaters* 32). Toni Morrison's quest is similar. In 'stripping back' to the source of language she uses the metaphor of rebirth, symbolically returning to the mother's body, in order to re-enter language with an enhanced sense of the self/body. The fluidity, sensuousness and diffuseness act as a balance to the fixed and divisive values contained in patriarchal language. I have sought to apply Kristeva's theory of semiotics, not in order to interpret Toni Morrison's work in feminist terms, but as an instrument to examine the narrative structure and imagery used to evoke this sense of renewal towards a reclaimed identity through a greater sense of balance, which must include language.

> The pleasure of the text is that moment when my body pursues its own ideas — for my body does not have the same ideas I do.(Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* 17)

Lacanian theory establishes a link between language and psychoanalysis. The 'mirror stage' of a child's social development is the point when it identifies the mother as 'the other', thereby producing the ability to define oneself. The second stage, the 'symbolic order', establishes the acquisition of language and entry into this stage is represented by the Oedipal crisis. Saussure believed that identities are arrived at only as a result of difference and it is at the symbolic stage that difference is established through language. Kristevan theory of semiotics emphasises the marginal and the diverse and disrupts Lacan's theory because it is placed in and derived from the 'chora', the period before the symbolic stage and therefore before language. It is an instinctive awareness of a rhyth-

mic flow or drive which must be repressed in order to articulate structured speech. But the repression cannot be total and, as Toril Moi describes it, it is a 'pulsional *pressure* on symbolic language' (Toril Moi, *Sexual Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* 162). It re-emerges as a subversive force creating ambivalence, confusion, absence, silence and disorder within the 'symbolic order'. Presented as pre-Oedipal, a major characteristic is its lack of gender and therefore its accessibility to both men and women. In stripping back language, Morrison incorporates this instinctive, rhythmic flow into the narrative and characterizations of her novels, creating both energy and balance.

Nature and the spiritual are areas associated with the semiotic. As his spiritual guide Pilate establishes a sense of the past in Milkman and in doing so provides him with a bridge between the symbolic, the ordered, rational world in which he lives, and Kristeva's semiotic. Having 'lost all interest in himself' when he discovered he could not fly (Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* 9), Milkman loses touch with the semiotic part of himself. He perceives the world in materialistic, unyielding terms and is emotionally distanced from his family, unable to distinguish his sisters from his mother. Physically his imbalance manifests itself in a pronounced limp and a face which 'lacked coherence, a coming together of the features into a total self' (69). But knowing that his 'life was pointless, aimless and [that] it was true that he didn't concern himself an awful lot about other people' (107), Milkman is receptive to change. It is Pilate who rekindles his contact with that basic semiotic urge and as she dies 'he knew why he loved her so. Without ever leaving the ground, she could fly' (336) and he discovers the spiritual and transcendental, not physical, meaning of flight. The narrative of this final passage is a combination of the symbolic and the semiotic. It has a linear structure and a logical syntax that are disrupted by imprecise phrases like 'Peace circled her', which is resonant of the motif of circling that runs through the novel and is suggestive but is never clarified. As it moves towards the end, it becomes more semiotic in its refusal to be clearly defined or explained or to provide a neat closure.

The semiotic exists within the symbolic as a constant chal-

lenge. The concept of dogs talking to men which Toni Morrison uses in the hunting episode in *Song of Solomon* comes directly from the semiotic. Stripped of personality, self and body by the darkness Milkman becomes reliant upon his senses. The apparently disconnected sounds of the hunters and the dogs begin to take on a form of communication. The dogs understand and react to the 'long *yah* sound', the 'low *howm howm',* the 'thin *eeeees* of a cornet' and the *'unh unh unh'*. 'No, it was not language; it was what there was before language' (278). It challenges the rational and the attempt to define it brings it into the symbolic but the sensuousness of the discourse continually refuses such definition:

> ... he whispered to the trees, whispered to the ground, touched them, as a blind man caresses a page of Braille, pulling meaning through his fingers. (278)

The narrative of the episode shifts between the narrator and Milkman's consciousness to indicate his awareness of the semiotic. When the hunt is over the symbolic order reasserts itself as, with a 'sudden rush of affection' for the people at home, Milkman is drawn into the hunters' banter and storytelling. He is symbolically reborn but it is his re-awareness of the semiotic which balances and makes him complete:

> Laughing too, hard, loud, and long. Really laughing, and he found himself exhilarated by simply walking the earth. Walking it like he belonged on it; like his legs were stalks, tree trunks, a part of his body that extended down down down into the rock and soil, and were comfortable there - on the earth and on the place where he walked. And he did not limp. (281)

The presence of the chora is intimately associated with the child's earliest experience of the mother's nurturing body. It is always fertile and in the process of her rebirth Beloved's thoughts and senses respond actively but without the control and structure of the symbolic order (Toni Morrison, *Beloved* 210-13). Her thoughts are a collection of images which, like Beloved herself, elude precise definition, but they are instinctive responses to her condition. Although they appear to be confused, without syntactical adherence and with no coherent message, they are definite and with a drive forward and an apparent intent. The recurrent references to 'crouching' and piles of dead people evoke images of slave ships but she

also appears to be in a state between life and death with others who 'are all trying to leave [their] bodies behind' because only then will they die. But 'it is hard to make yourself die forever' (210) and the repeated phrase 'in the beginning I could see her' (211) marks the beginning of Beloved's genesis, her rebirth, and the passage then moves toward her emerging from the waters. The repetitive image of the face constantly changes between 'her' face, 'my' face and sometimes 'her face is mine' but the pronoun is predominantly possessive and the passage appears to be insistently striving toward a goal. The dual ownership of the image is blended into one, 'her face is mine', until the end of the passage when the image is split as Beloved symbolically reaches the 'mirror stage' when she recognises her mother's image as separate from her own:

> I sit the sun closes my eyes when I open them I see the face I lost Sethe's is the face that left me [...] it is the face I lost. (213)

At first the reader encounters the outraged ghost of a murdered baby, then the form of a young woman, each intent upon claiming for herself alone the mother who killed her. The slippage of the signifier Beloved throughout the novel eludes definition and, retaining this characteristic of the chora which once defined is fixed by the symbolic and reduced, it perpetually undermines that which organizes and controls our experience. On the one hand Beloved is exactly what Sethe thinks she is, the spirit of her dead child and this is how she functions in the text. But she is also a symbol of those who survived transportation on slave ships and her language encompasses both roles. When Denver asks 'What's it like over there, where you were before?' she means what was it like being dead? But Beloved's response conflates her experience of the dark, cramped hold of the ship with the 'in-between state' before her rebirth. Her 'crouching' becomes the foetal position:

> "Dark," said Beloved. "I'm small in that place. I'm like this here." She raised her head off the bed, lay down on her side and curled up.
>
> Denver covered her lips with her fingers. "Were you cold?"
>
> Beloved curled tighter and shook her head. "Hot. Nothing to breathe down there and no room to move in." (75)

Indefinable and not fixed Beloved merges the past with the present and life with death, denying the existence of a gap.

Dividing and partitioning eliminate the possibility of meaningful speech. Just as Baby Suggs preaches to her congregation to 'listen' to the body's alternative knowledges, Paul D discovers that in breaking through silence, the lack of or suppression of language, the visual takes on new meaning:

> Not one spoke to the other. At least not with words. The eyes had to tell what there was to tell: 'Help me this mornin; 's bad'; 'I'm a make it'; 'New man'; 'Steady now steady.'" (107)

Once the men linked but divided by chains and ropes begin listening and watching, a language of the body develops and a collective action becomes a possibility. Through the guidance of Hi Man, who serves as the Baby Suggs figure on the coffle and similarly knows 'what was enough, what was too much, when things were over, when the time had come' (108), the men develop yet another discourse. A series of tugs and pulls with which 'they talked through that chain like Sam Morse' (110) transforms the very device that keeps them divided and partitioned transferring its 'power' into a mechanism for collective agency. This gestural discourse enables the men to swim blindly but simultaneously out of the mud which crushes and loosens their cages during a torrential rainstorm, and to escape northward as a collective. Their bodies are no longer speaking the slave-mastered, proprietary discourse, but instead are beginning to articulate new identities.

Authority over one's own body is related to authority over discourse and language. Bodily and linguistic disempowerment frequently intersect. Ink, the tool for communication which is produced by Sethe, is turned against her and used as the ammunition for weapons of torture, pen and paper. Sethe tries to regain her body by asserting control over the word 'characteristics' that has consigned her body to a notebook. The terror at seeing herself, her body defined and divided between a human and an animal and having it committed to paper, was worse than 'undreamable dreams' of the physical violence of torture, rape or murder she had witnessed:

> 'And no one, nobody on this earth, would list her daughter's characteristics on the animal side of the paper. No. Oh no. Maybe Baby Suggs could worry about it, live with the likelihood of it; Sethe had refused — and refused still.' (251)

Language can ki!l, reduce and annihilate black people's humanity. It is also the medium by which they can resurrect and re-identify their selves and their culture. Beloved strips back in order to reclaim and (re)build. Beloved physically reclaims her body until she is bigger than Sethe. Sethe reclaims her value as a person, her own 'best thing'. Denver is drawn back into the community by visiting in order to thank the people who left food. Identified by their name or an X 'with designs about them' (249) the written word becomes embracing and friendly but simple and accessible. Extended by being taught 'book stuff' by Miss Bodwin (266), by the end of the novel Denver has found words and language enabling, allowing communication and authority over her own body and identity:

> "Well, if you want my opinion."
> "I don't," she said. "I have my own."
> "You grown," he said. [...] she left him because a young man was running toward her, saying, "Hey, Miss Denver. Wait up."
> She turned to him her face looking like someone had turned up the gas jet. (267)

Just as Sethe and Denver reclaim their individual bodies, so Baby Suggs re-establishes the communal body through her own 'great heart', the one part of herself not 'busted' through slavery (87). On receiving her freedom she takes possession of her own body recognising it for the first time as it begins to come to life:

> But suddenly she saw her hands and thought with a clarity as simple as it was dazzling, "These hands belong to me. These *my* hands." Next she felt a knocking in her chest and discovered something else new: her own heartbeat. Had it been there all along? [...] She couldn't stop laughing "My Heart's beating," she said. And it was true. (141)

She transfers her private knowledge to the public domain by preaching to her congregation in the Clearing. As April Lidinsky points out (*The Discourse of Slavery* 196-97), Baby Suggs's very name signifies her transition between public and private identities and their discourses. "Baby" is the private, intimate name given to her by her husband by which she reclaims her identity and denies the slave name "Jenny". "Suggs" signifies her marriage contract which is recognised amongst slaves but not under white law, thereby freeing her of any imposed proprietary slave discourse. Her public 'caress',

'holy', recognises her new social role as teacher and preacher, in which she finally finds the words 'that the roots of her tongue could manage' (141). Once she has gained authority over her identity her discourse is given life and, itself centred on the body just as "the Word was made flesh", it teaches others to reclaim their bodies:

> "Here," she said, "in this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it hard. [...] Love your hands! Love them. Raise them up and kiss them. Touch others with them, pat them together, stroke them on your face [...] *You* got to love it. This is flesh I'm talking about here. Flesh that needs to be loved." (88)

Every part of the body is celebrated and explored. Sight, touch, sound and movement are driven together and Baby Suggs's words provide the impulse. Their bodies are propelled into motion, a dance which gives them expression to re-inhabit their feelings:

> It started that way: laughing children, dancing men, crying women and then it got mixed up. Women stopped crying and danced; men sat down and cried; children danced, women laughed, children cried until, exhausted and riven, all and each lay about the Clearing damp and gasping for breath. (88)

Their private, physical and emotional expression in the public domain symbolises the collective body of black Americans, who, like Sethe, could only claim ownership of their bodies bit by bit, an ownership marked by free expression. Music is a basic semiotic urge which allows self-expression. Baby Suggs's voice guides them through their dance and, finding the language inadequate to express the rhythms of the body, she finally uses her own body as an instrument. It evokes an instinctive response from the congregation that give expression to a music of their own:

> She stood up then and danced with her twisted hip the rest of what her heart had to say while the others opened their mouths and gave her the music. Long notes held until the four-part harmony was perfect enough for their deeply loved flesh. (89)

Music is part of the semiotic disruption of the symbolic order but the semiotic is not always a soft, comforting maternal flow and the ambivalence of the music in the city in *Jazz* illustrates how it may be a threatening, even a dangerous force. Hunting is a recurrent metaphor in Toni Morrison's novels which is used to illustrate the existence of a potential threat. Joe's intention to search for Dorcas becomes a hunt driven by a force outside of his control:

> I wasn't looking for the trail. It was looking for me and when it started talking at first I couldn't hear it. I was rambling, just rambling all through the City. (Toni Morrison, *Jazz* 130)

The 'faint hoofmarks' on Dorcas's face and the sense of 'tracking' that drives Joe register an equivalence that sets Dorcas up as the prey to Joe's hunting instinct. But the music disturbs him and causes other people to frown while at the same time enjoying its sound and it is this negative, 'evil' force which is driving Joe:

> I dismissed the evil in my thoughts because I wasn't sure that the sooty music the blind twins were playing wasn't the cause. (132)

The motif of the twins in the novel is a metaphor for the plurality of controlling forces and the illusion that anyone person is in control, and it is directly associated with the music. The dancing couples believe they are in complete harmony with each other, regulating their own movements in time with the music but 'that illusion is the music's secret drive' (65). It seduces the dancers into a false sense of control and security as it solves and dissolves any questions or doubts they may have (188). The 'blind twins', just like the dancing couples, are not really twins and 'Probably not even brothers', that too is part of the illusion. The different forces, like the different instruments, while appearing to be in harmony have separate drives which have independent influences. The guitar deceives, confuses and subverts while the clarinet is deliberate but subtle and seductive and is part of the city's sensuality, 'sending secret messages disguised as public signs' and offering protection to lovers by 'covering [their] moans with its own' (64). But it is the brass that is in harmony with the rhythm of the city's daily life, pervading the senses and lives of the people and blending into the atmosphere:

> Sure of themselves, sure they were holy, standing up there on the rooftops, facing each other at first, but when it was clear that they had beat the clarinets out, they turned their backs on them, lifted those horns straight up and joined the light just as pure and steady and kind of kind. (197)

The music sends competing messages. It is simultaneously soothing and distruptive, happy, hostile and manipulative. Its 'sooty' rhythms invite a correspondingly rhythmic response as people dance, tap their feet and click their fingers. But its lyrics register complaint, as the raunchy humour of 'When I was young and in my prime I

could get my barbeque any old time' belies a subtext of a sensed underlying threat, a 'complicated anger' and hostility in the 'greedy, reckless words, loose and infuriating' (60). The music's excitement masks the anger of the wronged lovers and of the betrayed veterans of World War I who returned from war in Europe to white violence at home. It coerces people to do 'unwise disorderly things' (8) and, like Joe who is confused into hunting Dorcas and like Dorcas herself, they succumb to its challenge to 'Come and do wrong' (67). But it is the competing and diverse combination of these contra rhythms and messages which is essential because it gives momentum, creates energy and drives forward. As Violet and Joe develop their own private rhythm which flows in harmony with the driving public rhythm so they are able to achieve a balance and progress.

To conclude, every act of interpretation is a domination, according to postmodernist theory. A will to control the knowledge of history through the transmission of language is a will to power. The history told by Toni Morrison in *Song of Solomon, Beloved* and *Jazz* is also a will to power, a strategy to allow a people to be the subject of its own history, not as marginalised 'others' or addenda. But just as the contra sounds of jazz are seen to exist independently while complementing each other, reinterpreting the same work over and over again, creating energy and driving forward, so the narrator invites the reader/audience to take part, to 'make me, remake me' (229) by constantly reinterpreting her work.

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THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF R.K. NARAYAN'S *THE GUIDE*

Nirmaljeet Oberoi

R.K. Narayan's *The Guide* was first published in 1958 and received the Sahitya Academy Award in 1961. It is the story of the rise, fall and rise of Raju, the railway guide. Charmed by the art and beauty of Rosie, the daughter of a Deva-Dasi, Raju leaves his home and profession for her. Marco is Rosie's husband, with whom she has alighted on the Malgudi Railway Station. Marco has undertaken a project to study the caves at Mempi Hills. Malgudi, in the novel, becomes the site where the human emotions and conflicts dominate the lives of the characters. Marco's relationship with Rosie is unsatisfying and unromantic. Hence, even after her marriage, Rosie is unable to wean herself from a keen desire to dance which she had inherited from her matriarchal Deva-Dasi tradition.

> Marco was just impractical, an absolutely helpless man. All that he could do was to copy ancient things and write about them. His mind was completely in it.... Perhaps he married out of a desire to have someone care for his practical life, but unfortunately his choice was wrong — this girl herself was a dreamer if ever there was one. (113)

Raju enters the life of Rosie and with passage of time transforms her into a celebrity artist with her new name — Nalini. Rosie is further transformed into a money spinning machine, which she often resents overtly. Raju's forgery to acquire Rosie's jewels leads him to conviction. One marks the fall of Raju at this point of the narrative. After the two year imprisonment, Raju retires in anonymity to a temple in a remote village named Mangala. By quirk of fate, Raju is looked upon as a saint — a swami, whom the villagers (mis)understand as capable of and willing to redeem the drought in Mangala by observing fast for twelve days. Helpless and unable to shatter the faith of the villagers, Raju is compelled to undertake the fast. The narration closes with Raju's final move towards the river. He "opened his eyes, looked about, and said, 'Velan, it's raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up under my feet, up my legs—.' He sagged down'" (247). The end marks the renewed rise of Raju as swamihood is thrust upon him.

This paper attempts to analyse the narrative structure of the novel, mainly its story; it does not treat story as raw, undifferentiated material but as a structured entity, comprising separable components. *The Guide* is a narrative fiction, which means the narration of a succession of fictional events. An event may be defined as something that 'happens', something that can be described by a verb or a name of action, for example, talking (to someone), defying (some person or tradition). Since the definition given above talks about a succession of events, there is more than one event in the narration. According to Rimmon-Kenan, "Story designates the narrated events, abstracted from their disposition in the text and reconstructed in their chronological order, together with the participants in these events" (3). In a narrative structure, the various events have the potential of weaving a network of internal relations. Such a view of narrative is akin to the structuralist stance towards language. Each linguistic entity is linked to another to render a meaning. Such a view elicits a specific form from the narrative. The words in the text comprise a layer of communication but through the textual layer an underlying structural form can be deciphered. This view was earlier suggested by Bremond (4-32).

Greimas (1977; 23) takes up the same stance and accepts the two levels of representation and analysis:

> ... an apparent level of narration, at which the manifestations of narration are subject to the specific exigencies of the linguistic substances through which they are expressed, and an immanent level, constituting a sort of common structural trunk, at which narrativity is situated and organised prior to its manifestations. A common semiotic level is thus distinct from the linguistic level and is logically prior to it, whatever the language chosen for manifestation. (*Diacritics* 23)

Opposed to the above view is the stance taken up by Todorov that story is, in some subtle way, dependent on style, language and medium: "Meaning does not exist before being articulated and perceived —, there do not exist two utterances of identical meaning, if their articulation has followed a different course" (20). At this point, we are faced with the same epistemological dialectic which binds together the oppositions as 'langue' and 'parole' in Saussure, and 'Competence' and 'Performance' in Chomsky. However, this paper

upholds the assumption that story structure or narrativity is isolatable and rests on the 'immanent' level as well as the 'apparent' level.

If we accept narrativity to be at the deep level and text to be at the surface level, we accept the notion of surface narrative structures and deep narrative structures. The paper analyses the narrative form of *The Guide* from this point of view. According to Rimmon-Kenan, "Whereas the surface structure of the story is syntagmatic, governed by temporal and causal principles, the deep structure is paradigmatic based on static logical relations among elements" (10). The surface structure in the narrative is the manifestation of its deep level. When Levi Strauss and Greimas accept the notion of deep narrative structure, they accept the presence of a pair of opposed entities, which Levi Strauss calls a pair of 'mythemes' and Greimas calls a pair of 'semes'. It is assumed in the paper that in *The Guide*, a set of binary oppositions, which perhaps is best capable of generating the network of events on the surface level, is rise /fall. This binary opposition causes dialectical relationship among events. Raju *rises* to material heights with Rosie, Raju *falls* due to greed, Raju *rises* when swamihood is thrust upon him. With the same paradigm Rosie's life can be described. Rosie *rises* to professional heights with Raju, Rosie *falls* due to Raju's greed, she rises in self-relaisation, the indication being the retrieval of Marco's book from Raju's Liquor-chest.

The deep level is intangible. It is abstract. The problem here is how to recover it at the surface level in a tangible form. The solution can be threefold: 'event-labelling', 'paraphrasing', and 'chronological' arrangement of events. Event-labelling can be done from the point of view of Roland Barthes five codes of textual reading and analysis, namely the proairetic code. At this point of the paper, I would attempt to divide the novel into clear event boundaries in order to accommodate the threefold solution to realize the deep-level narrative to the surface level. The proairetic code labels the action in the narrative. In *The Guide*, there appears a strong unity of action as each of the characters acts defiantly. The description best suitable to the major actions of the narrative appears to be *Defiance*. By mere event-labelling, often clarity is marred.

Hence, 'paraphrasing' is an important solution to be coupled with event-labelling. By paraphrasing the major actions, I shall attempt to draw event boundaries in a chronological order.

(a) Raju is happy go lucky boy playing around and wasting his time. Soon in the narrative, he is presented as a guide who also minds his father's railway stall.

(b) 'a' is connected with 'b' when Rosie and Marco come to Malgudi and hire the services of Raju as a guide. Raju's and Rosie's mutual atttraction results in Marco's desertion of Rosie and Raju's desertion of his home and the joint materialistic rise and fulfilment of Raju and Rosie. The paradigm of 'rise' accommodates and clubs the above 'a' 'b' event-boundaries.

(c) Rosie, who is transformed into Nalini, and Raju, who is transformed from a railway guide to the manager of Rosie's money and professional matters experience a fall. For Raju, the fall is a result of his forgery of Rosie's signature and the subsequent trial and imprisonment. For Rosie, the fall means a sad realization of Raju's treachery as well as her own folly of being unfaithful to Marco.

(d) At the end of each of the segments, there are seeds of the beginning of the next one. At the final stage of the novel, Raju's life drifts, though unwittingly, towards 'sainthood'. Rosie comes to peace with herself and lives alone and dedicates herself ho her profession. Thus, each of the events is structured according to the paradigm at the deep-level and forms a network of relationships.

Coming to the event-labelling, the label *Defiance* was applied to all the four event boundaries. In segment 'a' Raju defies the social norms and is presented as a free bird, in 'b' Raju defies the social - order and traditions by his alliance with Rosie and together they defy the institution of marriage, in 'c' Raju betrays the trust of Rosie and in her we experience a subtle defiance and hostility towards Raju, and in the last segment 'd' Raju reaches heights from where he can not descend and hence has to defy the inner voice of Raju the practical materialistic man.

The deep structure is manifested in the surface structure in the form of events, comprising a transition from one state of affairs to another. A succession of states would imply a succession of events,

corresponding with the four event boundaries given above — the first event presents a state of uncomplicated single — status of Raju, leading to a complicated and defiant involvement with Rosie which in turn engulfs Raju in a state of materialistic life and the last segment turns Raju from a convict to a saint. I have considered four major event boundaries because each of the events can be classified into two main categories: one, events as 'kernels' which advance the action by opening an alternative, thus maintaining the linear progression of the narration; and second, events as 'catalysts' which 'expand', 'amplify' or 'delay' the 'kernels'. Chatman calls the catalysts as 'satellites'. In this context, Raju's boyish pranks, his activities on the railway stall and platform and his professional activities as a railway guide serve as catalysts. The arrival of Rosie is an event which can be labelled as kernel as it ties the first segment with the second and opens up a range of alternatives. In the second segment, various meetings of Raju and Rosie, their trips to Peak House at Mempi Hills serve as catalysts. Rosie's confession to Marco about togetherness with Raju is one of the kernel events which propels the event into the next one. At this point, I would like to point out that there may be more than one kernel events in close proximity which can hasten the pace of narration and unfold new openings. In the second segment, the snake-dance performed by Rosie appears to be greatly supportive of the event of her confession to Marco as the dance had intensified Raju's fascination for Rosie. The details of mundane comforts in the third block, interestingly, swell the section but the pace of the narration is exhilarated by Raju's forgery of Rosie's signature. To maintain the syntagmatic chain, the kernel event of Raju's imprisonment and release brings in a new turn of events where Raju 'happens' to become a 'swami'. In this segment, the major kernel event is the misinterpretation of Raju's message to Velan by the latter's 'semi-moron' brother. The message given by Raju was, "'Tell your brother, immediately, wherever he may be, that unless they are good I'll never eat.' 'Eat what?' asks the boy, rather puzzled. 'Say that I'll not eat. Don't ask what. I'll not eat till they are good'" (100). The message communicated by Valen's brother was, "'He wants no food until it is all right.' He ut-

tered it with such solemnity and emphasis that they asked, 'What did he say? Tell us exactly.' The boy deliberated for a moment and said, 'Tell your brother not to bring me any more food. I won't eat. If I don't eat, it'll be all right; and then everything will be all right'" (102).

Here the binary dialecticism of blind faith/reality, practicality/spirituality rock the very being of Raju. Although Raju later narrates the reality of his life to Velan, but instead of being a kernel event it merely acts as a catalyst. The catalysts provide the narration with 'micro-sequences', which, in turn, combine to make 'macro-sequences'. Events combine into sequences and sequences into a story. The novel begins with the fourth /last segment when Raju is released from the prison. Although, the chronological order is inversed in the narration, the unilinearity is maintained. There is a single storyline dealing with the lives of two major characters Raju and Rosie. Marco, Raju's mother and father, Gaffur and Velan serve from the periphery. In the last segment, Velan's dimwitted brother is a significant character in the sense that he activates the kernel event. The events are enchained, according to which the outcome of one sequence amounts to the potential stage of the next. Causality is a major requirement in narration to facilitate the story line. Each macro-sequence is related to the next by a cause-effect relationship. In the novel, causality has an explicit status instead of being only implied in chronology. Raju is fascinated of Rosie and leaves for town in order to seek 'fulfilment' – although Raju's and Rosie's 'fulfilments' have different shades. Raju commits forgery and is convicted. He goes to Mangala and is treated as a 'swami'. Velan's brother mis-communicates the message and hence Raju has to undertake the fast. The causality discerned here is what Rimmon-Kenan calls 'backward causality' (18).

Chronology and causality are important to maintain the story line but they are not enough; they are rather loose links. These links become strong when the events occur in the same represented world. The characters in the novel perceive the world with the same conceptual mode, and it is realized that this mode is one of binary opposition. Each of the characters is incessantly involved in struc-

turing and getting 'structured' by the world. The common perceptual mode is the oppositional pair of abiding /defiance; the conjunction/ disjunction with the socio-cultural institutions. The institutions of family, marriage and religious faith are constructed by man and they, in turn, construct man's world-view. In the world of *The Guide* these institutions dominate the course of action of the characters as abiding their norms are considered imperative and then they are defied/ rejected by them. Raju, Rosie and Marco oscillate between their rejection and acceptance of these institutions. But Raju's parents and the village folk perceive the importance of accepting the dictates of the socio-cultural institutions and do not oscillate between abiding and defiance. For them, the world is guided by these institutions which they recognize as true and acceptable. According to the principle of verum factum, that which man recognizes as true (verum) and that which he has himself made (factum) are one and the same. In the novel, the location is consistently Malgudi, depicting a consistent socio-cultural ethos, the characters follow the same line of action, the storyline is unilinear, and hence the narration has a neat closure and a strong sense of completion.

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"THERE'S ONLY DEATH HERE, / ONLY LIFE": NISSIM EZEKIEL'S VIEW OF LIFE AND DEATH

Anuradha

Life and death are two sides of the same coin; the one is invariably followed by the other. Indeed, it is a truth universally acknowledged that where there is life there is death and vice versa, and this cycle almost endlessly goes on. But these twin realities of human existence are tantalizing riddles and, therefore, have been understood and interpreted differently by different persons, including the poets, all over the globe from time immemorial. Indeed, this mystery of life and death haunts everyone, and hence it also catches the mind of Nissim Ezekiel who contemplates on death and life:

> I often think of death
> But cannot think the thought out to the end,
> For that would be the end of thought,
> Death or perfect peace,
> And life is imperfection.[1]

Nissim Ezekiel, whose poetic sensibility was nourished, nurtured and matured by his own vision and understanding, seems to believe that both life and death are not two inconvertible units but rather forms of synonymous entity. Life ripens into death, which, in turn, is a certainty of life, of course, a new life. Life is a perennial movement. Ezekiel regards life as a preparation for the inevitable event called death, which is a form of evolution:

> The world is for the dying, is there more?
> The obvious shore beyond the sea. ("Tonight," *Collected Poems* 94)

Ezekiel believes that between birth and death man is a traveller constantly coming face to face with many difficulties. The ultimate destination of every journey is death. The 'journey' image is present everywhere as far as the theme of life and death is concerned.

In the poem, "Enterprise", the poet images life as a pilgrimage:

> It started as a pilgrimage,
> Exalting minds and making all
> The burdens light. (*Collected Poems* 117)

Everything is happy and joyful in the beginning. This 'beginning' symbolises joyous and carefree childhood. But as life progresses, troubles arise and man finds himself alone and friendless. His basic

needs are not fulfilled: "Deprived of common needs, like soap" (*Collected Poems* 118). The 'soap' is imaged as a cleansing agent that drives away the filth. Here Ezekiel wants to drive away the filth of differences and other ills of heart, but he is unable to find the way to remove this dirt. He tries to seek the ultimate solace: "Home is where we have to earn our grace" (118). Here 'home' suggests the final end, that is death, where 'grace', that is the everlasting peace, can be achieved.

To Eekiel, man is only a guest in this world, and Nature a fond host. He is "ready for the feast/ Expectantly" and her 'silence', 'song', 'solitude' and 'sobriety' ("Day," *Collected Poems* 59) fill him with joy. Day offers him 'feast' and 'song' symbolises life, whereas death has been presented with the images of 'silence', 'solitude' and 'sobriety'. The poet makes use of Nature images to present life in its original, elemental form:

> 'I too am life',
> The image seems to say,
> 'Air, earth, fire, water,
> Joie de vivre — ("The Cur," *Collected Poems* 95)

Ezekiel thinks that even if man is a guest, his arrival on this earth fills his heart with joy. The 'mother's womb' is the starting point of life. One just has to have a look at the woman giving birth to her baby; the complacent look on her face describes the immense joy felt at the beginning of a new life:

> Sprawling like a thought unformed
> Is the newly born, a small surprise
> Of limbs and cries resisting light
> And smelling sweetly of the womb. ("Birth," *Collected Poems* 26)

The portrayal of a little baby as a 'thought' impresses upon the reader the fact that long wait and patience precede the birth. The act of a couple's love converts into a living being, that is, a baby. The 'limbs' and 'cries' give a shape to the feeling of love in the heart of parents. But it is not that easy to begin a new life. To explain this, the poet describes the difficulties and hardships faced by a gardener in creating a new 'lawn'. He works hard to plant the grass, waters it and waits patiently for it to appear. It has to be looked upon and trimmed accordingly to maintain its proper growth. The poet

writes:

You keep an eye on it
in rapport with its secret laws,
maintain its ritual
of mortality. ("Lawn," *Collected Poems* 162)

Like the inception of life, the approaching end of life, the old age is a very difficult period. Ezekiel enumerates the numerous problems faced by a man in his old age. At the age of fifty, he is "a muddy peasant of the good life" ("At Fifty," *Collected Poems* 170) and at sixty-two he is watching death at a distance and eagerly waiting for it which is his final shelter:

Death,
in the distance
and near,
is my only halo. ("At 62," *Collected Poems* 273)

Making an appropriate comparison between the young and the old, Ezekiel vividly paints the condition of both the stages of life. The old age leaves a person weak and shrunken. He loses all his interest in life, and is no more enthusiastic and zealous that he was in his youth:

But the old are stale weak and on the shelf
And the young have shining eyes.

But the old are stale in the morning light
And the young have shining eyes.

.....

But the old are still as a fallen tree
And the young have shining eyes. ("Wisdom," *Collected Poems* 99-100)

Under the unconscious impact of ancient Indian philosophy, particularly the *Upanishads,* Nissim Ezekiel believes that life has its fleeting emergence from God, and after death it merges into Him. He articulates it as follows:

In the presence of death,
remember, do not console yourself;
there's only death here,
only life. ("Hymns in Darkness," *Collected Poems* 225)

The realities of life are often stange and dreary. Nobody can solve the mysteries of life without plunging into the secret abyss. The more one tries, the more one is lost in it:

To know beneath
the depth of life
another depth begin; ("*from* Postcard Poems," *Collected Poems* 244)

Most of the people's activities in the world grieve Ezekiel. He finds exploitation of innocent people rampant. He presents a painful picture of women who have to sacrifice their chastity because of poverty and starvation; they daily die a moral death. He talks about the 'lonely pillow' as an eye witness to such horrid and filthy experiences of life:

He will watch the virgin
Wear his fever, wait or turn,
Arrange her limbs as he desires,
For so he sees the female image
On a lonely pillow in the single room.
("The Female Image," *Collected Poems* 68)

Nissim Ezekiel feels that Illusion always brings solace to the otherwise dull life. Man always dreams of a better future. He should have a will to make his life happy and this will come through hopes and dreams. This optimism is articulated by him thus: "Only those alive can be reborn" ("Remember and Forget," *Collected Poems* 61). If there is no dream in life, it is like a rudderless ship, and so Ezekiel lays stress on dreams in life. According to him, dreams sustain a man in this world permeated with suffering and agony:

I close my eyes and let
my dreams sustain me for a while.
("A Small Summit," *Collected Poems* 152)

Ezekiel feels that poetry is a true friend of man, as he is able to forget the pains of life in the beautiful world of verse. He treats poetry as a way of life, as a continuous flow and as something which is inextricably related to human existence. Though art gives solace to the suffering mankind, yet life is superior to art. But Ezekiel feels very sad at the present day condition of both poetry and life. The lost faith in life is clearly apparent in the present day poetry. He seems to be hurts immeasurably to see

... both life and art
Are ground and bogged in crudity. ("Prayer I," *Collected Poems* 54)

Ezekiel believes that death is an eternal reality. The poet images death as a beloved whose presence brings relief to the tired

and wounded lover. Man has to face myriad hardships throughout his life, but when death comes all these hardships completely disappear:

> Floating down the hill, as on a cloud,
> Proud as lovers are, inarticulate,
> We lose ourselves in mingling with the crowd,
> Not unafraid of this ambiguous fate.
> We look inquiringly at road and sky,
> A certain happiness would be — to die.
> ("Love Sonnet," *Collected Poems* 121)

The road is the image of life whereas sky symbolises destination, i.e. death. And the poet realises that the ultimate happiness can be found only in death.

Like many Indian poets, Ezekiel makes use of images pertaining to the sea and the river in order to express his view of life and death. Water symbolises life to him. He has beautifully presented the images of the sea and rivers in "A Poem of Dedication":

> There is a landscape certainly, the sea
> Among its broad realities, attracts
> Because it is a symbol of the free
> Demoniac life within,
> Hardly suggested by the surface facts,
> And rivers what a man can hope to win
> By simple flowing, learning how to flow,
> ("A Poem of Dedication," *Collected Poems* 39)

The 'sea' presents the image of life that appears smooth and calm at the surface but has thousands of hidden storms and fluctuations underneath. The 'river' suggests the continuous flow of life.

Ezekiel doubts what lies beyond this world. He feels that nobody can answer this question, not even the dead because God confers an oath of secrecy on the dead not to disclose the identity of that world. It seems that Ezekiel does not have a fixed notion about the scheme of death. Human existence has always been shrouded with mysteries. But death, too, has uncertainties, which make it fearful, though the poet, like most of us, knows that death is inevitable. All the frets and fumes of life upset man because of the fear of death. But he waits for this ultimate reality, despite its frightening nature and form:

I am afraid
of bleeding to death,
as I once nearly did,
but know I must find it,
that invisible and intimate place
of which my prophet speaks.
("*from* Edinburgh Interlude," *Collected Poems* 295)

The poet is convinced that the soul of a man finds release from the corporeal frame and the haven for the soul is death, though invisible but inevitable. The actual life is with God in heaven. At the time of birth, man is separated from God, who is the real end of life. Ezekiel seems to believe that man bids farewell to his eternal life at the time of birth.

Ezekiel feels that life has to pass through varied painful experiences which enable man to become pure. But this purity can be achieved only with the help of the Almighty. Naturally, the poet says:

Deliver me from evil, Lord,
Rouse me to essential good,
Change the drink for me, O Lord,
Lead me from the wailing wood. ("Psalm 151," *Collected Poems* 73)

Here God has been presented as a rescuer. God takes a keen interest in the well being of man. 'Wailing wood' symbolises the turbulent experiences of the sea of life. Not only this, but the poet also goes a few steps further to convey his idea that life is purified and becomes stronger by self-surrender before God who delivers us from these trials and tribulations:

.... The feast
Is spread by gods with friendly wings
Who lead us through the myth and maze. ("For Her," *Collected Poems* 88)

After passing through the trauma of 'myth' and 'maze', life is to be handed over to God in the form of death without any conditions. It is the discretion of the God of Death whether He fills it with joy or not. God himself is the deciding authority. Hence, Ezekiel finds pleasure in submitting himself to the Eternal:

A life is a symbolic pattern.
He's this life.
He's the interpretation. ("Hymns in Darkness," *Collected Poems* 219)

Ezekiel pleads for a staunch faith in God. He believes that the Eternal

will bestow immense mercy upon him. He, like a boatman, manoeuvres our course silently sitting at a distance and guides our boat of life even on the roughest sea of peril and problems to reach the safe destination.

Nissim Ezekiel accentuates the importance of love to make life worth living. Love is the feeling that helps a man to enjoy his life. Life is not possible without this tender emotion. It is only love that conquers death. He reminds us of the story of Savitri and Satyavan focusing on how the latter is rescued by the former from the clutches of Yama — the God of Death. Ezekiel, too, feels that he will not be overpowered by death as long as his hand is held by his beloved. But if his hand is left, he would not be able toi live anymore: "Unloved, I cannot stay alive." ("Sub-conscious," *Collected Poems* 271). The pangs of separation can not be borne by the poet. He finds that the departure of his loved one means leaving him on this earth and her going to the heaven. He thinks that the soul is imprisoned in the body. The life of man is nothing but a sentence being spent by the spirit on the earth. To him the beloved should be in front of him so that he may feel the ecstasy of real love. Therefore, he ejaculates: "Perpetual life is in the mutual kiss..." (" Admission," *Collected Poems* 90). He puts forth a question whether death exists for the lovers or there is no entity called death for them:

.... The more you love
The less you burn away.

Is there then no change or death? ("For Her," *Collected Poems* 88)

Ezekiel is not in favour of just passing time on this earth waiting for death. Though death is inevitable, yet he does not want to leave any stone unturned in making life beautiful and worth living. To him, the only way to enliven life is the sweetness of the mysteries of love. No wonder he writes:

Life can be kept alive
By contact with the unknown and the strange,
A feeling of mystery
Of man and woman joined.... ("To a Certain Lady," *Collected Poems* 28)

He likens not only life to love, but also sees similarity in love and death. The following extract evidences it:

.... To move into another state, ineluctably, like death. Perfection in the flow of consciousness, like love. ("Encounter," *Collected Poems* 34)

In fact, Ezekiel's imaging death as love is very peculiar and particular. Just as a person drifts to another world after death, so love carries him to a different world. All about the earlier life is forgotten in both love and death.

Ezekiel believes that all life is beautiful, be it that of a human being, a worm, a squirrel or even that of grass. He celebrates the joy of living in all forms. To him, to be alive "is a cause for celebration" ("After Reading a Prediction," *Collected Poems* 155). His 'worm' ("The Worm," *Collected Poems* 10) is the symbol of unfailing strength that endures rain and continues to move forward, but man can not tolerate this strength and kills it. And the 'agile flick' ("Squirrel," *Collected Poems* 62) of a squirrel fills his heart with unfelt joy.

However beautiful life is, it is not permanent and every being does not follow the same pattern of death, getting old and dying. Many persons are killed by others as the Paradise Flycatcher is "Spelling death to flies and moths" ("Paradise Flycatcher," *Collected Poems* 139), or as the lizard does:

though his aim was only
the death of cockroaches.
("In the Country Cottage," *Collected Poems* 158)

Ezekiel is true to the reality of the world when he points out that sometimes death appears all of a sudden in the form of an unexpected accident. He notices one such death — the death of a hen — during his morning walk. It makes the poet thoughtful as he immediately witnesses the group of crows feeding upon the dead hen. Mark the realistic portrayal of the sordid reality of death:

A host of crows
came upon the corpse.
They flapped their wings
and cawed to celebrate the event.
("Death of a Hen," *Collected Poems* 288)

One notices horrifying images of death in Ezekiel's poetry. The merriment of one at the end of the other presents a devilish picture. But this is the course of Nature that can not be avoided, and it raises a question in the mind: Is Death, that has been called a

peaceful haven by our prophets, actually worth desiring? Little wonder the poet expresses his doubts thus:

> But is there at the end
> Beatitude, achieved by few?
> Or will it be the tragic view? ("Something to Pursue," *Collected Poems* 17)

Ezekiel is perplexed when he studies the ancient Greek poets and finds them craving for death. He fails to understand why these poets shun life:

> Why do so many of those
> Greek anthology poets
> Say it's best not to be born
> And being born, to die early?
> ("Ten Poems in the Greek Anthology Mode," *Collected Poems* 276)

The poet assumes that they were tired of the sufferings of life on earth, and the best way to avoid them is to prefer death. Indded, life and death play a game of 'hide and seek'. Without the existence of one, the existence of the other is not recognised or realised. Inevitably, life and death are interdependent. True, death is the ultimate reality without any pretension, and therefore the poet states:

> No more pretence. An end
> To Pretension. ("A Conjugation," *Collected Poems* 146)

To end, Nissim Ezekiel's poetry is interspersed with cogitations on life and death. Like any thinking man, especially an Indian who is invariably a philosopher philosophizing about everything related to human existence and beyond, this poet, though a modernist and a Jew and an Indian only by birth, is as much preoccupied with the riddle of life and death as the essentially philosophical poets like Sri Aurobindo and Tagore. However, he does not present a systematic attitude towards these haunting realities of existence. Moreover, he is, as evident from the foregoing discussion, does not follow any 'ism' or school in this regard, and is as unique in this respect as in every other aspect of art and ideas.

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[1]Nissim Ezekiel, "Sotto Voce," *Collected Poems: 1962-1988* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.51. All subsequent references to this book are given in parentheses in the text of thepaper.

INTERROGATING DIVINITY: DOM MORAES'S "AFTER THE OPERATION" SONNET-SEQUENCE

Sandeep Kumar Yadav

The sonnet-sequence "After the Operation", comprising twelve sonnets, is the last piece in Dom Moraes's *Collected Poems 1954-2004* and may be regarded as the poet's last will and testament. It is a seminal poem in the sense that it combines the significant details of the poet's personal life with his view of the microcosm interspersed in between his humanist, ironically atheistic and non-conformist notions. As the title itself indicates, this sequence of twelve poems was born out of experiences before and after the poet was operated upon for his throat cancer on 15 April 2003. It is a commonplace of Moaraes scholarship that he has used masks in his poetry and it may not be very easy to distinguish the man who suffers from the mind which creates. "Truth sits on the lips of a dying man" goes the saying. Without any concern about its legal ramifications, one can reasonably argue that the ideas contained in "After the Operation", by and large, provide a connecting thread to Moraes's poetry. The present paper is an attempt to show how Moraes could place his personal experiences in wider contexts and, thereby, legitimize his worldview.

It may not be out of place to preface this analysis by taking into account the scene of despair and disillusionment that gripped human history in the wake of the Second World War. Coincidentally enough, these were the formative years of Moraes as a poet whose exposure to British poetry in mid-1950's brought him in proximity with the Movement Poets. One recalls the concern and anxiety of Philip Larkin, the leader of this movement, so vociferously expressed in "Church Going" at the growing disillusionment of people towards religion. The poet concludes, however, that come what may, "this serious house upon this serious earth" shall continue its relevance since three important rituals birth, marriage and death are solemnized in church premises. Moraes's stay at Oxford lasting for several years coupled with intuitive scepticism in matters of religion sharpened his conception of the universe. It may be pertinently

recalled what he wrote about God in *From East and West* at this point of time:

> The God who destroys us, who permits suffering, who creates catastrophe, if he exists, manifests himself in these curious vibrations of the atmosphere. An unhappy monster, he lies down on us like a blanket, and we smother under him. (Moraes 97)

Convalescing at his residence after the fatal operation and also defying the prescriptions of the medical doctors to live and die on his own terms, Moraes speculates at length in this sonnet-sequence on the very creation of universe vis-à-vis human situation treating his own self as a potential victim in this savage world. The poet challenges the received Christian notion that this world was created by God with a purpose which was obviously to redeem the fallen man by His Grace. He questions the very postulates of Christianity in unambiguous terms in the concluding piece:

> The creatures I created told me for years
> That we would end as we started, by accident,
> and turn back into the emptiness of the sky. (*CP* 355)

The conviction that human life began as historical accident and will end leaving nothing, could have hardly been expressed in more effective terms. All the remaining eleven sonnets in one way or the other corroborate this idea and argue convincingly in favour of this conviction, even at times, apparently resorting to cynical gestures.

The opening sonnet begins with Moraes's bitter relationship with his mother, her consequent mental ailments, her admission into NIMHANS, eventually her death and the poet taking away his mother's dead body for cremation. These events have been recalled with rare precision which betrays the quality of life his mother had led upon earth:

> From a heavenly asylum, shrivelled Mummy,
> glare down like a gargoyle at your only son,
> who now has white hair and can hardly walk.
> I am he who was not I. It's hot in this season. (*CP* 344)

Moraes's competent handling of the epithets "heavenly asylum" and "shrivelled Mummy" is as remarkable in its thematic profundity as in its stylistic virtuosity. Moraes's mother had serious mental problems and had to be ultimately admitted to an asylum (NIMHANS)

where she breathed her last. She had also been an extremely religious lady with unwavering faith in Christianity to the great annoyance of her journalist husband Frank Moraes and the sensitive son Dom. The epithet "heavenly asylum" is a bitter and ironic description of her sad demise as it records the poet's overtly unchristian predilections. It is apparently blasphemous to think of heaven as a shelter meant for the abnormal and the mentally diseased, the very place immortalized by Milton as the "blissful seat of heaven". The poet seems to suggest that for his mother it is simply a shift from one place to another, from worldly asylum to heavenly one. As if this comparison is not complete, the poet employs another epithet "shrivelled Mummy" which creates the visual image of her mother reduced to skeleton before death and who, by now, must have been left as mere skeleton in her grave. In his autobiographies and also in some early poems the poet shares with his readers that his mother loved him very dearly and wanted his only son to be close to her all the time. Moraes also confesses his strong reservations against her which haunted him throughout his life in monosyllables — "I am he who was not I". Groaning under acute pain after the post-operative worsening of the malignant tumour prompts the poet to view his suffering in a slightly larger context — "the acrid reek of my body disturbs me/ in a city where the people die on pavements." The line tenaciously implies that only one fate awaits the whole of humanity, rich or poor, to die alike in asylums or on pavements. In the face of such an overpowering obsession with mortality the poet assumes an oracular posture: "There is no reason left for anything to exist." Such a cynical outburst tallies with the earlier quoted position that "we started by accident,/ and turn back into the emptiness of the sky."

That this overriding sense of nihilism is just a way of decoding human life, is attested to by the second sonnet — "Trapped in a place where I did not want to be/ without anyone with whom I would like to die." (*CP* 345) The earlier resolve to depart from this world in the face of an acute helplessness is replaced by a wish to "die with someone you would like." The sense of attachment with this world, despite its disheartening propositions, is made more trans-

parent as the sonnet progresses when one meets the woman visiting him in the hospital ward with "the breasts under/ like heavy doves that fluttered for release." This juxtaposition of the Christian image of dove with the mundane breasts underlines Moraes's non-Christian credentials.

The pain of bereavement from friends and acquaintances is the thrust of the third sonnet beginning "Death will be an interruption of my days." In an otherwise frustrating human existence, Moraes does feel that "the private/ intimacies I have that cannot be taken away." The poet regrets that death will deprive him of his invisible communion with his dead father whose ideals have provided him sustenance at crucial junctures in life. Moraes seems to voice Eliot's idea "... the communication/ Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living" (Eliot 192). The sagacious advice received from his father about human predicament has been still more pronouncedly recalled in the seventh sonnet:

> 'I tried to tell you that it was hell out here,
> I tried to say this wasn't a human world.' (*CP* 350)

It is singularly noteworthy that Moraes's humanist persuasion surfaces in several sonnets and is at the centre of his concept of universe. It begins with the premise that it is a purposeless universe created by an unfeeling and cruel power, who is christened as God by people. Since "Your [God's] face, inhuman, shows no trace of pity" (*CP* 347), he calls him "Monster who unmade man, masturbate, leer" in the fifth sonnet. If the creator of this universe is denigrated as "a hideous God" in the third sonnet, the suffering experienced by the poet on the operation table for the removal of the malignant lump compels him to employ the choicest dismissive epithets for God in the fifth sonnet:

> My throat was split open by a surgeon's knife.
> Though he was a pleasant man, whom I liked
> when he took the tumour out, he invaded all
> the private places in my head, and, you, God,
> giggling watched. I shall choke on my blood
> but not to toast you, monster made by man. (*CP* 348)

Surprisingly enough, Moraes admires the surgeon for his pleasant task to mitigate suffering while God is rebuked for simply watching

("giggling"), in an indifferent manner, his own creation groaning under pain. The poet finds fault with the philosophical and spiritual systems which attach so much reverence to an otherwise savage power. Bruce King pertinently comments:

> Moraes sees the world as cruel, and God another name for suffering and for death. He reverses the notion that God made the world, rather it is man who had made God in the image of his experience of pain and disappointment. Such a god is a monster, not to be celebrated, thanked or worshipped. (King 197)

In his callousness and unconcern for the suffering humanity God resembles Jehova, the angry God of the Old Testament ("Uzi in hand, he looked for Arabs to slaughter"). The poet views the large scale genocide perpetrated by Hitler in his slave camps so passively watched by the creator of this macrocosm ("but Yahweh did not come to comfort or save"). Such a grim and depressing situation leads the poet to think about human life in Existential terms:

> The grinding gears of an absurd machine
> recycled many friends whom I knew well.
> They, as they went, stayed calm and cynical. (*CP* 354)

The mechanical character of the world so effectively communicated by the use of the words — grinding gears, machine, recycled — leaves no room for human sentiments and belies the Biblical injunction — "Man was made in the image of God." The images of violence and death stored in the poet's consciousness make him restive and he seems to be fed up with life — "I have had enough of what is called reality." The conclusive realization that there is no escape from death and suffering makes the poet resolve that the sooner this life is over the better. Since life has no meaning in face of death he has resolved in the very opening sonnet — "Goodbye now. Don't try and meddle with this."

This decision to bid goodbye to this world, however, has not been taken in an impulsive manner because there are subtle clues in the tenth sonnet which convince the reader of its well-considered inference. The reader is told that on his way to Bangalore to visit his mother in 1960 Moraes had been reading Dante's *Divine Comedy*. It is again significant that despite his strong allergy to Christian dogmas and values, the poet irresistibly looks for problems con-

fronting man only within the parametres of Christianity. The concluding line of the tenth sonnet would only have been uttered by a saint or spiritual leader deeply absorbed in human dilemma:

> I realize, with a lump, harmless as yet, in my throat,
> that the comedy of our lives is not always divine. (*CP* 353)

It is to be noted that Moraes has traversed a long space from the opening sonnet with the cynical outburst ("there is no reason left for anything to exist"). The Sonnet-Sequence that began on a note of utter depression interrogating the very godhead of divine power reaches a point of understanding which confers meaning on life. The candid admission that there are possibilities of transcending suffering underscores the positive dimension of an otherwise disgusting phenomenon. From very early on Moraes has been preoccupied with "so vast an emptiness" ('John Nobody') and "The prolonged vowel of silence" ('Absences') and, no wonder, in his last poem also his concern with "The emptiness of the sky" remains intact. However, the old apprehensions about life have given place to a sense of poise that saves his poetry from being cynical and nihilistic.

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TIME IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S *A MATTER OF TIME*

Vipin Kumar

Time and space repeatedly figure in modernist and postmodernist fiction. The contemporary philosophy advocates that time and space have ceased to exist in the form in which they were coventionally understood. A new relation between the two — a mutually complementing relation —, which has gradually emerged, is now being acknowledged and explored by philosophers and literary men alike. Consequently, in the analysis of modernist fiction space and time are now considered as areas for particular investigation. The eighteenth and the nineteenth century novels concentrated more on the objective or the external world of events rather than on an uncertain subjective, internal world. But the modernist writers have little interest in the external as a viable space for exploring reflections of the self. Turning inwards was the only way in which they could make the world mirror the wide compass and the immeasurable depth of the soul. And this could be possible because of the new concept of time which is explained by Virginia Woolf in *Orlando* thus:

> An hour, once it lodges in the queer element of the human spirit, may be stretched to fifty or a hundred times its clock length; on the other hand, an hour may be accurately represented on the timepiece of the mind by one second. This extraordinary discrepancy between time on the clock and time in the mind is less known than it should be and deserves fuller investigation. (61)

In modernist fiction what we find is just this preference for 'time in the mind' rather than time on the clock. Seeking to suppress or stretch or reshape the dimensions of time the modern narratives strive to come out of the convention of seeing life as 'a series', as a chronological sequence. Discussing the historical origin of the form of the novel, Mikhail Bhaktin observes: "The novel, from the very beginning, developed as a genre that had at its core a new way of conceptualizing time" (*The Dialogic Imagination* 70). And Gerard Genette holds that "the core of the novel is its potential to manipulate time" (*Narrative Discourse* 37). No wonder in *A Matter of Time*

as the title indicates, Shashi Deshpande tries to weave a philosophy around the concept of time.

T.S. Eliot, perhaps the greatest man of letters of the twentieth century, says in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" that tradition

> ...involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to any one who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence....This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity. (*Selected Essays* 44)

Elaborating the sense of the temporal and the timeless nature of time, Eliot in his poetry states that along with the awareness of the past there is an insistence on the expression of the moment when this awareness is realized. In *The Rock* he writes:

> Then came, at a predetermined moment, a moment in time and of time,
> A moment not out of time, but in time, in what we call history; transcending, bisecting the world of time, a moment in time but not like a moment of time,
> A moment in time but time was made through that moment: for without the meaning there is no time, and that moment of time gave the meaning. (*Selected Poetry* 36)

Eliot goes on to say in *Four Quartets*:

> To be conscious is not to be in time
> But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
> The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,
> The moment in the draughty church at smokefall
> Be remembered; involved with past and future.
> Only through time time is conquered. (*Selected Poetry* 72)

Thus, along with the conventional idea of time, there came into vogue in the modern age the philosophical concept of Time, 'a time in the mind' which is also called psychological time. In Eliot, Proust, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce we come across terms like 'still points in the turning world', 'moments of being' or 'epiphany', which transcend these timeless moments of Time into a religious experience of cosmic time.

In *A Matter of Time*, the narrative begins and proceeds in linear time with the statement of the dramatic decision of Gopal to desert

his family. The gradual and painful disintegration of the marriage of Sumi and Gopal is detailed through a sequence of events. Sumi and her daughters journey from their rented house to the Big House, Sumi's ancestral house. Sumi, who had been married at the age of eighteen, has had no chance or opportunity to realize her own creative individual self. Though Gopal's description comes as a shock, she soon learns to establish her independence. Her house hunt with the property agent in the streets of Bangalore and her newly learned art of driving the scooter take her in and out of the Big House. Sumi's search for her own identity and independence bear fruit when she succeeds in finding a job for herself in a school. Kalyani's and Premi's futile attempts to convince Gopal that he should revoke his decision, Aru's desperate pursuit of Lawyer Surekha to help her to bring to book her erring father who has wronged her mother, and the ultimate end of Sumitra and her father in a fatal accident — all these incidents roughly span a period of little less than one year. The double death in the family of Sumi and Sripathi coincides with the death of a national leader, India's Ex-Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. As the country is rocked by the national disaster, the members of Sumi's family, who are shell-shocked and distraught by their own personal tragedy, sit around the TV set in stony silence. The reference to this historical date roughly encompasses the linear movement of the dramatic events of the story in a contemporary time frame:

> Life has come to a standstill, people driven into their homes by the terrible shock of another assassination....
>
> Gopal finds them huddled together in front of the TV. Shocked and grieved as they are, there is for the time being, some respite from their own personal sorrow, they can lose themselves for a while in a larger calamity. (*A Matter of Time* 241)

Thus the individual loss and grief, the unfair ways and means of Destiny and violence are seen in a larger context and from a different and broader perspective. Throughout the narration of this linear movement, Deshpande uses, significantly enough, the present tense. Trying to understand and assess the situation in which she finds herself as a deserted wife, Sumi's initial reaction has been slow, but then all of a sudden she would burst into a flurry of rest-

less, hurried activities. So also the rest of the characters. A slowing down of action which is followed by a frenzied bustle of activities, thus, gives the narrative a binding and gripping strength. These alternating movements from slow to fast and then from fast to slow perhaps are a kind of movement necessary for survival. Through an adherence to present tense, the author is able to bring out effectively this oscillating movement. The immediacy and the urgency of the experience are best conveyed through the persistent use of present and present perfect tenses.

Within this chronological sequence of events, blocks of narrative sections are arranged in which the major and the minor characters of the novel, through voluntary and involuntary memory, move freely in and out of time, from past to present and present to past. The co-existence and interaction of the two strands of time rather than one clock and calendar time give the novel its complex dramatic structure. Ruled by memory, which serves as a bridge, with its powerful connections to past and present, the novel constantly searches out past or lost time and largely recovers them in the time regained. Opening up multiple, interweaving pathways into the past, memory recovers, revives and reconstructs lost time and refreshingly frees the narrative from its bondage to the ticktack of clock or calendar time.

Memory, which becomes a major structuring device in the novel, thus, leads to the creation of a psychological time or 'a time in the mind'. In the context of the crisis in her life — the desertion by Gopal, her husband —, Sumi travels back in time to the night when she had left her parents' house in a fit of defiance and had gone to Gopal who was then living in the out house as their tenant. Sumi remembers that Gopal had behaved strangely even on that day:

> Sumi remembers, now, the night she had gone to his room, knowing that only this way could she break out of her father's authority. But Gopal, to her consternation, had closed himself against her. 'Go back, Sumi,' he had said, almost coldly. Only her stubbornness and the thought that she could not possibly return to the room she shared with Premi, had kept her there, alone in the room, that whole long night, while Gopal sat out in the tiny open veranda. Until morning, when he had come in and put his arms about her, as if folding her into himself, into his life. (24)

She is able to review and understand the 'quirk' in Gopal's character and sees the present development in the light of the past incidents: "She knows now that they were hints, telling her that it was always there in Gopal, the potential to walk out on her and their children" (24). Hence she comes to the conclusion that "the reason lies inside him, the reason *is him* " (24).

As Sumi returns to the Big House with her daughters, a flood of memories like a disturbed beehive comes swarming in. Not only Sumi, but also her mother Kalyani travels to the remote past and remembers with a pang her own experience of being deserted by her husband. The bitter memories of her dominating mother and her forced marriage with her uncle are once again revived. The tragedy of losing her only son, and the trauma of sitting alone with her daughters on the railway platform, abandoned by her husband, had always been a haunting memory to her. Linking Sumi's tragedy with her own, Kalyani exclaims bitterly, 'History repeats'! She, thus, sees time as cyclic. She also links this to the fate of women in general. Obviously, the family tragedy is seen by her as a repetitive tragedy occurring time and again in social history. Kalyani also sees Time as Destiny. Destiny or Fate is seen as the power of Time. According to her, human beings can never escape the powerful and far-reaching influence of Fate.

Kalyani and her sister Goda often look back at the past in a simple nostalgic way. With a kind of romantic longing, they conjure up the fairy tale-like marriage of their parents:

> When Kalyani and Goda speak of Vithalrao and Manorama's marriage, their voices carry the ring of people retelling myths, of troubadours singing of love, of storytellers relating the wondrous things that happened in the past. Sumi, overhearing them, thinks of Kalidasa's *Kumarasambhavam*. Just so did the poet sing of the marriage of Shiva and Parvati, making of it a magical, awe-filled story, yet one that falls within the realm of belief because it sings of love, of the love of a man and a woman. (118)

This tendency to romanticize or even to see the past in terms of a mythical time is shared by even Sumi and Gopal. Not only Indian myths but also the Shakespearean myth of Hamlet syndrome and the modern existential myth of Camus and Kierkegaard are evoked by Gopal as he tries to grapple with his apprehensions and misgiv-

ings. To explain the sense of emptiness which he had always experienced and the constant shadow of fear which had chased him all through his life, he reviews his own past. As a young man when he learnt about his parents' marriage that his father had married the widow of his own brother, and that his sister Sudha and he himself did not share the same father, he was totally shattered. Being extremely sensitive and imaginative, he sees himself in the place of Hamlet. Ruminating on his own history and the history every individual marks for himself or herself, he echoes Kierkegaard's words: "Life must be lived forwards, but it can only be understood backwards." Justifying this mystification of past or history, Gopal says:

> People have a right to their own history; they need their myths as much as the facts, perhaps even more. That Meerabai drank poison and lived, that Purandaradasa was converted by God in the guise of a mendicant, that Tukaram's poems emerged intact from the river after thirteen days — these beliefs are part of people's lives; to do away with them is to make a rent in the fabric of their lives. (99)

Though the word history is used in a broad sense to suggest just the passage of time or the past, the novel also refers many a time to the historical past. The Big House, built by Vithal Rao and named Vishwas after one of his ancestors, is steeped in history. The idol of Ganapati which still survives on the niche above the gate of the family house, and the family documents which Kalyani still guards zealously, take us back to the history of Marathas. Kalyani's great grandfather Vishwas Rao had come down to South, to Karnataka from Maharashtra along with Peshwa Madhav Rao's invading army. Kalyani and Goda, who are extremely proud of their family history, naturally, see themselves not as ordinary people, but as privileged people who have behind them the strength of a whole historical race. Apparently, they are able to look at themselves and their house as relics of a great tradition. Social and political history is, therefore, seen as a part of their personal life. The Big House, thus, becomes a metaphor of history, of community where past meets present and links it to future and posterity.

Gopal, who is a History Professor, comes out, time and again, with his interpretations of history. If for Sumi history is a passage of time and destiny, the power of time, Gopal thinks that human

history is fired by human desire. He ruminates:

> 'History exists in the final analysis for God.' Camus is right. Yes, that is how it is. Only God, or whoever it is standing outside this game, can see the whole of it. For the rest of us, a story in which we play a role ourselves, can never be clear to us. Only a Vyasa could write a story in which he played a role, and at times a not very noble role, with such detachment and clarity. (99)

Inevitably, as the floodgates of memory are thrown open, the main characters of the drama, stepping back into their childhood and youth or to a still remote past — the historical past —, interweave history with historic sense. Personal history is related to the family history and the family history is seen in the wider context of the history of the nation. In a deft way, Deshpande links and blends micro memory with macro memory and takes her narrative above and beyond the limits of linear time, to a higher level, and frames it in historical time.

Virginia Woolf suggests in *Orlando* that memory is the seamstress, and that it runs her needle in and out, up and down, and hither and thither to weave the rich tapestry of the narrative. Little wonder Gopal, a self-questioning sophist as he sees himself, has many a moment of vision. These units of time, when he experiences awe-inspiring and insightful moments of epiphany, elevate the text to the elusive realm of Cosmic Time. As the priest, conducting the rituals of the funeral, mingling Sumi's and her father's ashes into the river, renders them or rather delivers them 'Runamukta', Gopal wonders whether they are really free. If they are free, is it not at the cost of their body? But P.K.'s (Gopal's brother-in-law) theory of immortality comes to his help: " ... death only means that your role is over and you go backstage into the darkness while the play goes on" (237). Unable to accept even this consolation, Gopal yearns to know the "duality which Sumi was granted the moment before her death, the duality that ends all fragmentation and knits the world together..." (238). He then has the revelation of an existence in time, rather beyond time where past, present and future exist simultaneously within him. During these brief and most elusive moments where the temporal intersects with the timeless — the eternity —, Gopal experiences Cosmic Time or a religious sense of Time:

> This is the philosophy of the burning ground. P.K. would have called it

> that. I know that once I move away from this time, things will go back to their normal size. I will learn to live with the knowledge that Sumi is dead, accepting the fact, putting it in its place. (238)

The authorial comments sum up the insight into time at which Gopal has arrived through his epiphany:

> And then he is back into himself, left with the thought: nothing is over. Whether our lives are long or short, we leave our marks on the world. Like the wall memorial to the Vietnam dead, our names are inscribed on it, visible to those who look for them. Nothing is lost, each moment remains, encapsulated in time. (238)

Thus, it is only 'a matter of time' within which the main characters — Gopal, Sumi, Aru and Kalyani — manage to make some kind of sense of the jigsaw puzzle of life. Death may signal the curtain call for many like Sumi and Sripati, her father. But there is Kalyani, a miracle herself, not yet destroyed by time, but, significantly enough, who has survived the onslaughts of destiny and is still there as a source of strength and support to Sumi's orphaned daughters.

Moving effortlessly and most unobtrusively from linear to the psychological time, to 'time in the mind' (of the thoughtful and perceptive characters of the novel) and by collating and juxtaposing the Historical and Mythical Time with the Cosmic Time, Shashi Deshpande manages to explore successfully the range and dimensions of time. Thus, by working out a comprehensive and complex philosophy around the concept of Time, she has given to her novel, *A Matter of Time,* substance and amplitude, and has combined the intellectual with the emotional, the spiritual with the mystical.

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BADAL SIRCAR AND THE THEATRE OF THE ABSURD

K.K. Kapoor & Priyali Dutta

Badal Sircar is the most distinguished Bengali playwright of the present age. He uses the Western idiom of the Theatre of the Absurd to project the socio-cultural reality of Post-colonial India. The issues he raises are basically existential; the *angst* he displays confronts every person in the materialistic world bereft of human or divine relationships. The Theatre of the Absurd portrays man trapped in an Existential dilemma — the human problem of choosing the right path in life.

Human existence is threatened by the anxieties of fate, futility and mortality. The anxiety of fate is related to an unknown future that awaits man every moment of his life. The anxiety of futility or absurdity is created by the apparent disconnection between action and result. Man means well and does ill, and all his plans fail at the time of execution. And finally there is the anxiety of death, the only certainty, the only truth of human existence. These anxieties beset all existence and restrict man from attaining a becoming life.[1] These anxieties lead man to three levels of estrangement. Fear of fate or death, fear of sin and condemnation, and fear of life's absurdity causing alienation and ennui. The first level of estrangement is from society when man becomes a loner. The second level is estrangement from God or faith that makes man an atheist. The third level is self-estrangement when man hates his own life and often commits suicide. The protagonists of the Absurd writing suffer from these anxieties and estrangements. The central character in Sartre, Camus and Beckett is a loner, wounded man fighting against not only his enemies but against himself and self-doubts.

The core themes of the Theatre of the Absurd run along the course of existentialism. These plays display the inner crisis of the modern man. The most besetting problem that man faces today is the problem of meaninglessness.[2] Man finds himself participating in a rat race and is estranged not only from his fellowmen but also from his innermost nature, having nothing within or without him to

fall upon in moments of crisis. The present century has seen the dissolution of old certainties and dogmas as Paul Brunton holds.[3]

Deprived of the succour of ancient wisdom, which provided the much needed basis for value and meaningfulness in life, the modern man has no substitute for faith and religion except science and information. Thinkers like Aldous Huxley have aptly pointed out: "Ours is a world in which knowledge accumulates and wisdom decays."[4] The malaise of the contemporary man has been considerably aggravated by the crisis of the present. Sisirkumar Ghose observes: "Everything conspires towards a philosophy of *meaninglessness, boredom and the absurd.*"[5]

The potential meaninglessness of human existence has corroded human life from various quarters. The Theatre of the Absurd is a revelation of a world where man is confronted by the self and the questions of his existence. A certain awareness of man's rootlessness and the consequential loneliness and anxiety[6] is the keynote of the Theatre of the Absurd. It provides a unique vision of the predicament of man in the contemporary world. It is also focused on the evils of man's material concerns. The Theatre of the Absurd is a sort of the return of the religious function of the theatre. It represents the confrontation of man with the spheres of myth and religious reality. However, it expresses the absence of accepted cosmic system of values but does not explain the ways of God to man. It merely presents an individual human being's intuition of the ultimate realities as he experiences them and descends into the depths of his personality, his being, fantasies and nightmares.[7] In the Drama of the Absurd, the ordinary characters are dramatized in such a way as their motives and actions remain largely incomprehensible. It is almost impossible for the audience to identify themselves with such characters. The more mysterious the actions and nature of the characters are, the less human they appear on the stage and the more difficult it is to see the world from their point of view.[8]

A similar ambiguity faces any analyst who tries to classify Badal Sircar's protagonists, male or female. As all relationships are fragile and all objects illusionary, the whole world of Sircar's drama

seems a whirl in a futile flux of diurnal rounds, travelling all the time but reaching nowhere. Among Sircar's best-known plays are *Evam Indrajit, The Other Side of History* (*Baki Itihas*), *A Day Afar* (*Pore Konodin*), *If There Were Other Chances* (*Jadi Aur Ekbar*), *A Crazy Horse* (*Pagla Ghoda*) and *There Is No End* (*Shesh Nei*). Of these the most popular is *Evam Indrajit* (1963) that was first performed in English in April 1970. In this play Sircar has dramatised the dilemma of the Indian middle class to choose between conformism and rebellion.[9]

The idea of the wirter's block owing to his absurd existence is launched at the very beginning, as he calls four young men from the audience to hear their stories. The young men introduce themselves as Amal, Vimal, Kamal and Nirmal. The author wonders:

> Amal, Vimal, Kamal and Nirmal? No, it can't be. You must have another name. You have to have. Tell me truly, what's your name? (*Indrajit* 4)

The writer forces the fourth man to give his real identity, hidden by him for fear of being called a rebel, a social misfit. The absurdity of human existence is highlighted in the dialogue that follows:

> WRITER. How old are you?
>
> INDRAJIT. A hundred. May be two hundred. I don't know. According to the Matriculation Certificate, thirty-five.
>
> WRITER. Where were you born?
>
> INDRAJIT. In Calcutta. . . .
>
> WRITER. Death?
>
> INDRAJIT. *Not dead yet.*
>
> WRITER. *Are you sure?*
>
> INDRAJIT. [*After a long pause.*] *No, I'am not sure.* (*Indrajit* 5. Emphasis added)

Badal is interested in depicting the absurdity of the contemporary situation in which his characters find themselves. This is the situation where there is rampant corruption, unemployment and meaninglessness galore. The Writer, Manasi, Amal, Vimal, Kamal, Auntie and Indrajit happen to live in this absurd world where they are doomed to live alone and suffer from existential alienation. They continue to wait merely because they just happen to be born. It appears that they have been born against their wish, and suffer from the absurdity, transitoriness, meaninglessness and pointlessness

of the world. Thus, for men like Indrajit life has become a macabre dance of irrelevance to the music of time:

> VOICES. One-two-three
> One-two-three-two-one-two-three
> One-two-three-two-one-two-three
> Four-five-six (*Indrajit* 11)

The angst and alienation of Indrajit are universal phenomena in the modern world where either you follow the trodden path or face the humiliation of being an outcast, an outsider. And the irony is that, like Sisyphus, men like Indrajit run all life and reach nowhere:

> WRITER. *Indrajit* and *Manasi*. They've come a long way. A long way? Have they really come? Or are they just *going round and round? Round and round*? They can get married. Then the same round again. They may not get married. Again the same round. *One-two-three-four-three-two-one.* It's all a question of going *round and round. The answer is a circle-a zero.* (*Indrajit* 25. Emphasis added)

The play ends on a note of inertia, ennui, the dead end of humanism or materialism. The writer walks off with the choric song. Here goes the road, leading nowhere and never-ending, on which the modern man keeps walking like Prufrock or waiting for Godot, lost in the labyrinth of an absurd universe.

Baki Itihas was written in the year 1965 in Enugue, Nigeria. In Act I we are introduced to Basanti and Shardindu, who are a middle-class couple living in Bhawanipur. Shardindu is a lecturer in the college and Basanti writes short stories. Of late she has been running short of ideas. Shardindu tells her that the entire world is full of ideas. To prove his point he picks up the newspaper where his eye catches an article about the death of one of their acquaintances, named Sitanath, whom they had met at a zoo along with his wife Kana. Shardindu advises Basanti to create a story revolving around this piece of news. Basanti reverses the Ramayana myth in her story. From the very beginning one is able to detect waves of tension floating between Sitanath (husband of Sita) and his wife, Kana. Kana is an Amazon figure, a Tamasik archetype. She hails from an impoverished family and never had the chance to own anything. She is highly sensitive and very possessive towards her personal belongings. The couple has been saving some money to

construct a house over a plot of land which they have already purchased. So deeply is Kana attached to the land that she forbids Sitanath from selling it off under any circumstances. But her world comes crashing down when she comes to know from the court's baliff that Sitanath had mortagaged the land and there wasn't a single rupee left in the bank. It is the moment of truth for Kana, and so she decides to leave her husband and become the mistress of his rich friend, Nikhil. The piece of land, which swallows Sita at the end of Ramayana, in this case swallows up Sitanath and Kana's relationship. Kana is the Abhisarika, who becomes the Ardhangini and later on becomes a Kunthitha. At the end of the story Shardindu questions Basanti :

> Shardindu: Did Kana go Nikhil, only because of his money? Or had she really loved Nikhil?
>
> Basanti: *Kana never loved anyone truly.* Not Nikhil, not Sitanath. Her impoverished childhood had taught her one lesson — the wish to be relieved from poverty. Not the greed for money but the greed to have a permanent home.[10]

Jadi Aur Ekbar was also written in the year 1966. It deals with the themes of disillusionment and dissatisfaction. Sircar weaves a matrix of interrelationships in the play and also mocks at the concept of perfect marriage. Happiness and perfection are elusive states beyond the reach of humans, and marriage a no-exit situation. The absurdity of man-woman relationship in this play lies in the fact that they do not know what they actually desire from each other. The entire action of the play takes place in Neptune Happy Lodge, located on the shores of Bay of Bengal, where the characters of the play have turned up to spend their vacations. The lodge is managed by its manager Satyasindhu Seth. He is Satya (truth) personified, who is omnipresent, witnessing all action quietly. Apart from him there is Brajolal, who is the cook and an important character in the play. Among the guests of the lodge there are two married couples, Rotikant Sanyal and his wife Karuna, Sanjoy Ghosh and his wife Aatoshi and a spinster named Bonolata.

The tension, dissatisfaction and suffocation among the couples are evident from the very beginning. Sanjoy Ghosh, a poet, is unable to stand the presence of his wife or even her voice. He blames

her for his failures. He is a pseudo-intellectual who considers bachelorhood as the ideal state for a writer or a poet to succeed. He thinks that once he had the capacity to become a world famous poet but now his inspiration has dried up. He considers his wife to be *Manosa*, the Goddess of Serpents, whose poison has caused *Saraswati* — Goddess of Learning — to flee. Aatoshi, too, has her own set of complaints against Sanjoy. She is an ambitious woman hailing from a rich background. Impressed by Sanjoy's high educational degree, she married him. Now she realises that high degrees do not necessarily mean big bucks. Having broken down under the yoke of poverty and periods of starvation, she keeps nagging her husband, forever reminding him of his lowly status. She loves the poet in him but hates the pauper.

The other man-woman relationship in the play is that of Ratikant and Karuna. Their relationship has reached a *cul-de-sac.* Ratikant, who is discontented with the relationship seeks, solace outside by indulging in extra-marital affairs. He gets involved with well-educated, intellectual women whom he considers to be more attractive than his illiterate wife. He grasps their attention by narrating to them tales about his loneliness. He suffers from an inferiority complex and envies women like Bonolata, not because they might turn out to be his rivals but due to their independent status.

The Second Act is a dream sequence where *Budtarzin* (Native God of the Sea) grants all the wishes of the inmates of the lodge. Sanjoy gets his bachelorhood status, Bonalata is married to Ratikant, and Karuna is now a spinster. Aatoshi marries Brajolal who is now a rich man. Ironically though everyone's wish has been granted, yet no one is satisfied. Sanjoy who held Aatoshi responsible for his failure as a poet now starts considering her as his muse in whose presence his poetry would flower. Aatoshi who detested Sanjoy's poverty now starts appreciating his cultural refinement and creativity. Karuna is now independent and Bonolata is a married woman. Ratikant now appreciates Karuna, and Bonolata and Karuna wish to swap their positions.

Pagla Ghoda[11] (1967) is a scalding play which exposes the discrimination against woman in a patriarchal society. Sircar also

deconstructs the myth of romantic love. He weaves together many stories to create a collage. It is a complex psychological play which includes a plethora of issues. It is set in a cemetery where four middle-aged men — Himadri, a school teacher, Kartik, a compounder, Satu, a contractor, and Shashi, a postman — have gathered to cremate the dead body of a girl who is not directly related to any of them. The fact that the men have gathered there only to enjoy some free drinks points out their callousness. Each of them has a story buried in his past which is revealed in the process of the play.

To pass their time, they start poking their noses in the dead girl's past, but in the process the ghosts of their own dead past which they had kept buried for a long time start surfacing. The girl belonged to a poor family, and her father who had a paralytic attack was bed-ridden. She was married off to a rich lunatic boy. The marriage was never consummated and after remaining shut in a single room for three years the *girl* finally ran away. The boy's family astrologer had convinced the family members that the boy would be completely cured of his madness after marriage. Disenchanted, she ends her life by hanging herself. The girl's spirit forever keeps hovering in the background, transforming herself from time to time into images of Malati, Lachmi and Mili, thus coaxing the men to bring out the skeletons in their cupboards. Shashi and Malati are in love with each other. But Malati is already engaged to his brother, Pradip. When Malati confesses to Pradip about her pre-marital affair with Shashi, Pradip assaults her. Malati dies by pouring kerosene over her clothes and setting herself on fire. Himadri, a Maths teacher, was employed by Mr. Roy, a rich man, to teach his young son. Miss Mili Roy falls in love with Himadri but Himadri is acutely conscious of the difference in their social status. He can never accept her in a wholehearted manner. Himadri leaves Mili and goes away. She drowns herself in wine, and in a drunken state she crashes her car and commits suicide.

The Girl in *Pagla Ghoda* symbolizes the eternal feminine. The word girl is a common noun used by Sircar in a collective sense. She is every woman, tortured, humiliated, persecuted and tormented by her ego-maniac male God. The *Nayikas* start out as *abhisarikas*

developing into *vipralabdhas* and move on to *kunthitas* only to commit suicide later on. Throughout the play a dog keeps whining in the background. By turns the men try to drive it away, but it keeps returning back. Similarly, all the females in the play keep returning back to the males who drive them away. *Pagla Ghoda* is a symbol of time which is destructive and spares none.

Sircar's *Shesh Nei*[12] (1970) is a psychological play which explores the element of possessiveness present in personal relationships. The play moves around its central character Sumanta Sanyal, a world- renowned poet. Before the eyes of the entire world Sumanta is famous and successful but internally he is an escapist, an unheroic hero. During the course of the play, Sumanta's personal relationships are publicly exposed and scrutinized in a mock court. Interestingly the court is a figment of Sumanta's imagination. The man who summons Sumanta to the court and later on acts as Counsel for the Prosecution is actually Sumanta's conscience which keeps pricking him from time to time.

The first witness to make her appearance is Mrinalini Sanyal, the mother of Sumanta Sanyal, who symbolises the mother-beloved Oedipal relationship. She complains that her son has broken off all relationships with her. She is very possessive about her son and likes to keep him tied to her *pallu*. In this atmosphere Sumanta feels like a caged animal, who has no identity of his own. When she comes to know about her son's affair with a girl called Monika, she goes mad with jealousy. She goes to the extent of getting Monika expelled from the school by telling a string of lies to the headmistress regarding Monika's character. Sumanta, unable to stand the injustice done by his mother, breaks off all relations with her.

The second witness to make her appearance is Monika Bose, the third angle in the beloved-mother Oedipal syndrome. After her expulsion from the school she could not complete her studies for lack of money. Being a proud woman she had denied any sort of monetary help from Sumanta. Now she works as an attendant in a nursery school. She accuses Sumanta of being a spineless man who had put up a mere pretence of loving her, but had never actually loved her. Her marital life is under a lot of strain. Now she lives

alone with her two sons and does not use her husband's surname. The third female witness is Sumati Mitra. She is the female counterpart of Sumanta, his mirror image. She makes him confront all his failed relationships, one by one. Prashant Das, the whole-time politician, blames Sumanta for being a renegade, as he quit politics; Professor Amiya Kumar Mukhopadhayay blames Sumanta for not doing research; and N.C. Srivastava, Branch Manager, S.K. Industries Ltd., blames him for his inability to adjust himself to the new work environment. Apart from all of them, some nameless, faceless men also turn up and blame Sumanta, the poet, for not writing about their plight. Curiously the judge is absent throughout the entire hearing.

Thus the play ends, highlighting the dilemma of the modern man caught in a vortex of relationships which threaten to tear him apart. Sircar points out the futility of pointing fingers at others. All men born on this earth are equally guilty of the sorry mess of things around them; it is absurd to discriminate on the basis of caste, class or gender.

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[7]Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (Penguin, 1980), pp.402-403.

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[11]Badal Sircar, *Pagla Ghoda* in *Natya Sangrah* (Calcutta: Opera Pub., 1995), pp. 69-70 (English rendering mine).

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BOOK REVIEWS

NIRANJAN MOHANTY, *TIGER AND OTHER POEMS*

(New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2008), pp. xi+117, Rs. 200.00

Sudhir K. Arora

Tiger and Other Poems is the seventh poetic collection of Niranjan Mohanty (1953-2008) who made a notable contribution to Indian poetry. The title, *Tiger and Other Poems,* clearly illustrates that Mohanty has exploited the technique of symbolic mode through the metaphor of tiger which records his multifaceted experiences in life. The ninety poems in this collection illustrate tiger in the form of hunger, sex, death, silence, dream, waiting, time and creative process, and nineteen of these poems have tiger in their titles.

First, let me take those poems that have tiger in their titles. The poem, 'This is How the Tiger Comes and Goes', shows the stark stare of tiger, while 'Yet, This Tiger' presents tiger as hunger that makes everyone to move. 'Tiger, Once Again' illustrates different faces of tiger. The poem 'A New Tiger' reveals the destructive force of a new tiger that has "no whims, / no desire of its own. / Yet it moves forcibly / into the temples and mosques" (94). The poem, 'The Changing Tiger', is the best instance of understanding tiger as it states that it is not the tiger alone that makes the theme but "the context makes it so". Tiger in 'The Other Tiger' comes like loneliness and dampens the poet. The poet sees tiger even in heaven in the poem 'Even in Heaven, the Tiger'. The poem, 'This Tiger', expresses tiger as cause. In the poem, 'And These Tigers', the poet is not afraid of tigers or their company. Hunger is the theme of the poem 'Yet Another for Tiger'. The poem 'Tiger is the Theme' depicts that one can silence the words but not the tiger as it "wakes us to the infirmities / of our bones, the marrow within bones" (105). In the poem, 'Looking for the Tiger', the poet looks for the tiger that appears and disappears within him. But in the poem, 'There is No Tiger', he clarifies his point of view: "There's no tiger. / I create it out of nowhere, / to make it available everywhere" (108). The poem, 'A Tiger Always Lifts Me to a Garden', demonstrates his failure of taming tigers, while the poem titled 'The Tiger Comes No Longer to

Me' reveals the failure of the expected tiger. The poem, 'The Dream Tiger', expresses the condition of his limbs that have begun to lose strength. The best tiger poem is 'This Tiger Has No Meaning' which reflects over identity question of the tiger.

The remaining 71 poems that have no tiger in their titles have somewhere tiger. The very first poem, 'This Mind', depicts the poet's realization of identity through movement or a certain stir. In 'I Read a Book Printed Nowhere', he likes to read the unprinted book, every page of which "is an epic of meeting / and parting; of waiting and wailing". Through the poem, 'The Kalinga War', he wishes to spread the message of love through Asoka. The cause of sorrow in the poem 'Dukkha' is "this bee-hive mind that shelters fire-flies" of fuming desires. 'Escaping into You' is the best instance not only of romantic love but also of the imagery. The poem 'Love' speaks the language of heart. There is one poem 'I Envy the Lion' in which tiger has been replaced by lion. The poem, 'In a Dream', analyses dream. The poem, 'Death', reminds him of the death of his granny. In 'A Certain Delight', he is not afraid to go into the cave "where silence and darkness share their breath" (51). The poem, 'Swimming Across the River of Blood', expresses Duryodhan's desire to embrace death. The poem, 'Letting Go', reminds him of mango-pickles made by his grandmother. Rain, which is an essential part of the Orissan landscape, is not absent in this collection. In the poem 'What Haunts Me Most', he has a kind of fear — fear of becoming a tiger.

Tiger and Other Poems also reveals Mohanty's creative process. He wants to learn the alphabet of love from his father in 'A Tribute to Dad'. In 'When I Write', he states the purpose of a poem: "I know, a poem moves nothing, / not even dust in the column of light. / It follows none, yet, it makes / something happen" (25). In 'Poetry', he changes his opinion about poetry and believes that "nothing poetry transform, /except my being; nothing can it fulfil / except my dream of becoming / a bird, someday" (83).

To conclude, *The Tiger and Other Poems* makes a symbolical reading which makes the reader decipher the text that offers the multiple of interpretations. Surely, the poems in this collection will make the reader feel the experiences of life either overtly or covertly.

V.D. SINGH, *LANGUAGE LEARNING, TEACHING AND TESTING — A COMPANION*

(New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp.xxxiii+268, Rs.495.00

I.K. Sharma

In the heart of the book under review appears a seemingly innocuous term *literacy* that mildly taunts the educated for their static position. The reason: over the years the term has added new layers of meaning to itself, has expanded its scope of operation, and has thus acquired a newer character. This illustration of shift in meaning should persuade us to revise our opinion about ourselves. Likewise, a host of new critical terminology has at present gained currency in the domain of discourse justifying the expression 'explosion of knowledge'. This explosion has led to the birth of several mind-bogging academic disciplines from Anthropology to Zoology through linguistics, psychology and social sciences. As a result, new terms of various shades have invaded institutions of learning creating a gap between the knower (*literate*) and the ignorant (*non-literate*). Are Indian educators/ mentors/ teachers from the school to the university conscious of the changes that have taken place in the field of teaching, especially English as the second language (SL)? Have they learnt the differences beytween 'pedagogy', 'gerogogy' and 'androgogy', although each term relates itself to the common area of education? Can they distinguish between 'home language' and 'heritage language', between 'pragmatics' and stylistics' and so on? Readers/ listeners when confront such terms find themselves like Ruth 'in tears amid alien corn.' To save them from such an embarrassing situation a book was/is needed that may hold all such terms in its bosom. Prof. Singh offers a book of this sort. It proposes to cover — learning a language, teaching a language, and finally testing what has been learnt.

The book proposes to explain, in brief, various theories that had developed in the twentieth-century Europe and America and elsewhere. There educationists working at different rungs of the educational system faced the general problem of communication mainly with those who had been unacquainted with the language.

The movement of people from one part of the globe to another further aggravated the problem. It provoked a debate and various theories were propounded in this regard. One school advocated the idea that humans have a preordained structure, or say, innate faculty/ taste for learning the language (LAD), whereas the other insisted on the role environment plays in learning the language. Without bending either way, Mr. Singh explains each one under the appropriate head.

Related to the area of acquisition/ learning the language is the art of teaching a language. Numerous approaches have been mentioned in the book: what factors (e.g. mother-tongue-interference, etc.) lead to errors of all kinds and what strategies can be adopted to wipe out these dark marks on the body of the composition; which approach — 'dual immersion', 'chalk-talk method', bilingual, drama, play, dialogue and music therapy ('suggestopedia'), Dogme teaching, story-method, grammar-translation method, 'complete-method',etc. — can be effective in the actual classroom situation, will eventually depend on the ability of the teacher concerned. The author has brought all such relevant information at one place. Equally important is the way tests are devised as they have no fixed format and they "vary in their focus according to their purpose" (128). A classroom test may be simple while a TOFEL is quite rigorous. The book is a companion, a sober guide to a seeker of direction. Ever willing to help those who feel overthrown before 'surrender value' and 'syncopated approach' doing rounds in academic circles. Also, it may be noted that the book is free from sexism. Each entry has been written in precise language with notable clarity. However, even in the work of this standard, errors do irk. For instance, cusiness (p.124) in place of business. Similarly, 'solecism' promised on p.17 does not reappear at its place onward.

Measured by its content, it is a work of extraordinay dimension accomplished by an extraordinary teacher of English in the country. His early training at the University of Leeds and his long association as a professor with the School of English Language Education at CIEFL, Hyderabad has endowed him with intellectual strength and perseverance, and they are markedly visible in managing the bewildering galaxy of linguistic and other terms.

CHARU SHEEL SINGH, *PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS*

(New Delhi: Adhyana Publishers and Distributors, 2009), Rs.9500.00 (set of seven volumes)

Binod Mishra

Literature in India is taught mostly on the basis of theme and not on theories. As a result, the focus of the readers is confined only to the story and as a consequence the creative as well as artistic faculty of the writer remains ignored. Charu Sheel Singh's seminal book *Philosophical Hermeneutics* which runs in seven volumes is an innovative attempt at linking layers of consciousness both of the author and the text. The writer's attempt to awaken the literary world by making them realize the importance of philosophical methods in literature is of course a welcome sign.

The first volume of *Philosophical Hermeneutics* is entitled *Lotus at the Navel*. Charu Sheel considers philosophical hermeneutics as a *sine qua non* for literary criticism. Hermeneutics specializes in the interpretation of the word of God. The writer accentuates on the importance of hermeneutics in literary criticism. In fact, language is not restricted to sign reference systems but it also includes secrets of silence transformed into meaningful discourses of humanistic sciences.

The second volume subtitled *Festivals of Sound* augments the discourses of hermeneutics further. It centres on the meta-narrative which is a part of hermeneutics. Singh makes it clear that Hermeneutics is not only meaning-recovery process but it also helps in the self-transformation. Most of the continental philosophers including Descartes and Kant situate their propositions on Upanishadic lines and thus the meaning in their texts emanates from karmic deposits which lie latent in subliminal consciousness. The work makes a critique of dominant modes of linguistically structuration as practised by the mainstream Western hermeneutical thinking. The third volume titled *Swans at Dawn* examines the theories of Heidegger and Gadamer. An attempt is made to demonstrate how a good number of philosophers and writers preferred canons of creating and experiencing literature in favour of the Oriental.

Charu Sheel carries the discourses of *Philosophical Hermeneutics* further in the fourth volumes titled *Conchshell Memories* which acquaints the reader with the views of Frederich Ast, Schelegel, John Martin Chladenius, August Wolf, Meir Frederich, Daniel Ernst, and Schleirermacher. The fifth volume titled *Diamond Valleys* borders on the various premises of Hermeneuticians such as Schleirermacher, Ranke, Droyson, Boeckh and Dilthey. Charu Sheel Singh presents an in-depth analysis of their views regarding the understanding of the text. The author applauds hermeneuticians who take up the challenges of the recovery of meaning by enlarging himself with the casual nexus among various happenings and their effects.

The next volume named *Golden Peacocks* borders on historical hermeneutics and underlines the importance of the Vedas in their context. Language is not the only medium to extract meaning and understanding but the reader's affinities with authorial consciousness too have a major role in it. Charu Sheel Singh situates the origin of sounds in Lord Shiva's drum beats and deciphers the worth of *swaras* in the Vedas. The Vedas consist of auditory imagination having a realm of existence different from the corporality of the written characters of language. The Vedas are a testimony to Derrida's claims that the written characters are 'a violence upon the oral traditions'. Charu Sheel Singh continues the discussion of the Vedas in the seventh volume (*Lotus in Ambrosial Bloom)* too. Emphasizing its divine and not human characteristic, he advises Indian critics to look for Indian sources responsible for the birth of several theories. *Rasa, dhvani, alamkara, riti, vakrokti, auchitya* —— all prevalent in Indian scriptures may guide critics in finding subtle idioms in literary-philosophic genres. Any literary or philosophical text cannot stand the test of time unless it accommodates the old and the new since in a global world of today hybridization cannot be ignored.

All the seven volumes refer to different philosophic paradigms and may seem pedantic, but Charu Sheel Singh's poetic sensibility makes the reading easier and smooth. It may appear an ordeal to read all the volumes, yet the serious readers of literary theory will certainly find them very useful and rewarding.

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POINTS OF VIEW

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