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MILTON'S *SAMSON AGONISTES* : THE QUESTION OF SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES IN THE POEM

S. Viswanathan

As in the case of many other canonical works, a multiplicity of motifs and perspectives opens up in the course of Milton's *Samson Agonistes*. What, however, appears to be a particular feature of the poem, thus offering something of a challenge or problem to the reader, is that the 'guiding hand' (l.1) of the poet deliberately introduces such shifting perspectives and a proliferation of motifs and points of view in such fashion that the reader has to keep changing gear a little too frequently if not joltingly.

First of all, there is the mixed or amalgamated generic orientation of the poem, a feature that may be said to mark Milton's early dramatic poem *Comus* also. In his preamble, which Milton entitles, in terms of generality, 'Of that sort of dramatic poem which is called tragedy,' he mentions Aristotle, classical Greek models, a Latin tragedy by a Church Father on Christ and incidentally makes reference to the use of the chorus in the Renaissance Italian tragedy, apart from Greek tragedy. Milton's early, long-cogitated plans for composing a master-work 'that posterity will not willingly let die' included a proposal of a tragedy on the Fall of Man or another Old Testament subject. The master-work eventually turns out to be the epic *Paradise Lost*. In *Samson* Milton attempts a tragic poem which suggests at once the form and elements of classical tragedy, and of revenge tragedy and Christian tragedy at the same time, of the medieval idea of the tragedy of the fall, the prototype of tragedy contained in the *Book of Job* and other Old Testament themes, in addition to introducing touches of medieval romance, as in the Harapha episode. Also, the poem in several ways, fairly immediately relates to the staged Italian religious tragedies which Milton probably witnessed during the Italian tour and sojourn of his youth. Furthermore, Milton makes the poem one of discussion and enunciation of a number of his key ideas and preoccupations, literary, moral, political and those pertaining to religious ideology and evolution.

These ideas relate to the concept of the hero and the heroic, the ideal of true courage, the dialectic of inward-external, that of physical valour and wisdom (the Roland-Oliver complementarity), necessity *vs.* free will, resistance to and questioning of Providence despite the active acceptance of it. Milton's theodicy is another major theme in this poem; it may be said to be allied to but different from the process of 'justify(ing) the ways of God to Man' in the other poems of his. There is a prominent figuring of the idea of Election (so dear to the seventeenth century religion), of being one of God's chosen few, of the OT idea of the Covenant, and above all, the question of martyrdom. Also present are the motifs of despair, 'patience' and suffering, temperance, penitence, divine intimations, and the true God vs. false gods. Coming up in the poem, there are, into the bargain; other recurrent Miltonic themes such as uxoriousness, marriage choices and married relationships, and, above all, the challenge of temptation. The question strongly arises of the likenesses and the crucial differences between Milton himself and Samson in his portrayal. Perhaps one may say that the proposition, so vigorously advocated by William Riley Parker for a much earlier date of composition for *Samson*, regarded as Milton's final poem, almost predating *Paradise Lost*, has all but been disproved by Ernest Sirluck and Ants Oras with their analyses. In sum, one may say that Milton in the poem Hellenises, Hebraicises, Italianises, 'Miltonises', and ultimately Christianises.

The point is that the inlay of different motifs, and the quick succession of points of view and the multiple orientations seem to be part of a deliberate design and manner of procedure. More cruicially, Milton appears to have envisaged and executed the whole poem in an overall view, a grand vision or master-narrative. This master-vision can be characterized as a New Testament Christian view of God's total Providence for mankind and its ordonnance, as distinguished from and supervening on the Old Testament view. Such an angle of total vision which looks before and after Christ governs the poem as an informing principle. Milton's conception of Samson may be understood in the light of the view Milton expresses of the Hebrew prophets, judges and kings, through the words of the

arch-angel Michael in *Paradise Lost*, Bk. 12, in the course of the panoramic vision which he vouchsafes to the fallen Adam and Eve of the whole history of man finding its consummation in Christ's Crucifixion, Resurrection and Redemption of Man. It is noteworthy that Michael is responding in the words concerned to Adam's bewilderment about the plethora of laws and punishment in the OT order. The Archangel explains it in terms of the OT figures and events functioning as pale foreshadowings or imperfect anticipations of the NT dispensation to which the old order will yield place, the new covenant of love and grace replacing the old covenant of law and justice.

> ... Doubt not but that sin
> Will reign among them as of thee begot;
> And therefore was Law given them, to evince
> Their natural pravity, by stirring up
> Sin against Law to fight, that, when they see
> Law can discover sin, but not remove,
> Save by those shadowy expiations weak,
> The blood of bulls and goats they may conclude
> Some blood more precious must be paid for Man,
> Just for unjust, that in such righteousness,
> To them by faith imputed, they may find
> Justification towards God, and peace
> Of conscience, which how by ceremonies
> Cannot appease, nor can Man the moral part
> Perform, and, not performing cannot live.
> So Law appears imperfect, but given
> With purpose to resign them in full time,
> Up to a better cov' nant, disciplined
> From shadowy types to truth, from flesh to spirit
> From imposition of which law to free
> Acceptance of large grace, from servile fear
> From filial works of law to works of faith. (*Paradise Lost*, Bk. 12. ll. 285-306)

Cross-referencing Milton's way with Samson to such a view of the OT figures, we may see that Milton probably assumes a placing, typological view of Samson. A typological view is traditional enough as it finds expression in patristic commentary and medieval and Renaissance writings which considered certain classical and Hebrar figures as anticipatory suggestions of Christ and his mission

and martyrdom. In Milton's own typological apprehension the stress is more on the 'shadowy' quality of the 'types' or 'figures' as opposed to the 'truth' embodied in Christ, something like the difference between the 'broken arcs' and the 'perfect round'.

In *Samson,* however, Milton seems to build the poem on this premiss leaving it at the subterranean If foundational level of implication, the premiss that Samson at best is a 'shadowy type', leaving it to be inferred by his fellow Christian readers with their community of sensibility. Milton may have counted on his reader to see things through and at the same time beyond the OT frame of reference of law and retribution and reinterpret personages and their words and actions by extrapolating from a fuller Christian apprehension of their meaning and force. Or, perhaps Milton expected his readers to pull themselves up short at some point in the poem and readjust their level of response. Such a sort of Henry Jamesian technique of the 'guilty reader surprised' was attributed to Milton's *Paradise Lost* by Stanley Fish and Joseph Summers.

The proliferation of motifs and quick changing perspectives seems to be anchored in such a total view on Milton's part. In the initial phases of the poem the repeated emphasis falls on the 'steep tragic contrast' between what Samson now is and what he was. To the fore is the pity of his present tragic predicament. Samson displays sensitive aliveness to the direness of his plight and yet maintains a precarious balance on the verge of despair. The Biblical narrative tells us nothing about anything like the workings of Samson's mind. There he appears to be all brawn and little brain except for his occasional making of riddles and violent practical jokes. However, in traditional commentary and general reckoning, a state of despondency was attributed to Samson in his last phase. Thomas Nashe used the word 'sampsoun'; as a verb meaning 'to be thrown into a state of despair'. Samson's state in Milton's rendering as 'a living death' and 'walking grave' has resemblance to the condition of 'the dark night of the soul', though it is only at the level of an inadequate anticipation of such a phase immediately preceding enlightenment in the evolution of a saint.

The emphasis on Samson's fall strongly evokes the medieval

tragic idea of Fall in this classically oriented tragedy. A striking sense of mutability is called up. Milton brings about such an effect towards the end of highlighting the question uppermost in Samson's mind why God's providence should permit him, 'a person separates to God', to suffer such a fall. The tragedy of Fall becomes the tragedy of Providence. The question arises as a *cri de coeur* of Samson's. There is no definitive answer to such a question of his or that of Job's to God who answers him in thunder only to imply that 'mystery *is*'. Yet one cannot but, and well may, pose the question. Samson's resistance and resentment against providence is tempered and almost neutralized by his consciousness of his 'transgression' in letting himself to be 'fondly overcome by female charm'. Samson accepts God's ways to him, and the mediation of the idea of acceptance by the Chorus is somewhat redundant. The Chorus's pronouncements are sometimes in the nature of utterance and response interchange, sometimes in the nature of choric utterances of generalization.

What comes into relief here and elsewhere in the poem is Milton's sustained preoccupation in his poetry and thought with the question of theodicy. He often raises the issue in terms of the tension and conflict between providence or Necessity and free will. Samson learns through bitter experience, or more comes, to accept the providential ordonnance by sudden motions of the will, exercised not so much by volition but as though by providential prompting. The Chorus asserts that the justness of Providence is axiomatic and therefore unquestionable.

> Just are the ways of God,
> And justifiable to men,
> Unless there be who think not God at all,
> If any he, they walk obscure;
> For of such doctrine never was there school,
> But the heart of the fool,
> And no man therein doctor but himself. (ll. 293-299)

Two factors are to be noted about these and subsequent lines. In *Paradise Lost* the emphasis was on the total poetic process as meant 'to justify the ways of God to man'. But the words of the Chorus and other utterances in *Samson* simply assert the justness of God, almost ruling out of court any question, let alone questioning. It may

be that Milton implies that the old dispensation's understanding of God's justice is at a more simplistic level than the mature and complex Christian understanding. Secondly, he may suggest through the Chrous's use of the word in the mode ('Just are...') it adopts that it reflects the typical older exclusive emphasis on the justice of God in contradistinction to His love, mercy and grace. The point at issue is one of the traditional medieval convention of the debate of the Four Daughters of God, before Him, Justice and Truth on one side and Mercy and grace on the other. The resonance of Milton's total presentation is that of the implied superiority and supervenience of Christian over Hebrew.

Notably, Milton conducts what he calls 'the argument ... . heroic' (*Paradise Lost*, Bk. 9, ll. 13-14), another strong preoccupation with him, to a different effect in *Samson* from elsewhere. Milton locates ideal heroism as a deeply inward phenomenon, all but noumenal or numinous, on account of its emanating from divine grace and faith on the part of the hero, and thus not as merely martial valour. Milton's portrayal of heroism grounds itself on an inward-external dialectic. Samson is Herculean in his super-human strength and physical courage. But as he himself notes he woefully lacks wisdom. Milton points up his other qualities such as his abstemiousness, temperance and his being a pure water-drinking spartan. More significantly, Milton shows Samson as learning through painful experience the other restrictive virtues of 'patience' and penitence for his fallings off. In the direction of such virtues true heroism lies but it calls for an active, positive exercise of virtue in its encounter with its 'adversary'.

Again, the important component of moral choice to be made with careful, though fairly swift and timely, cogitation by the ideal or true hero through the inward workings of mind and will is rather lacking in Samson's moves and decisions. Manoa with famous irony says to him

> I cannot praise thy marriage-choices, son (l. 420)

Actually, Samson makes his choices in this respect, including a second-time one despite his being 'once bitten', by impulse which he thinks to be of supernal provenance. The four visitors to Samson, apart from the Chorus, can be regarded as in a way contrastively

corresponding to the four temptations which Christ encounters from Satan in *Paradise Regained*. Samson's response to his encounters, though in the poem it is inevitably rendered in the form of elaboration in argument in verse, is basically impulsive, one of either instinctive rejection or passive acquiescence. Indeed, the whole poem of *Samson Agonistes* may be said to be set in a sort of contrastive correspondence with *Paradise Regained*. After all, the two poems were published together in a single volume by Milton in 1671 the last work of Milton to be published. (The publication of his *De Doctrina Christiana* is a different case.) The contrast that gets suggested is between Christ and Samson in the quality of their relationship to God. If Christ is set in contrast to Adam of *Paradise Lost* as the second, new Adam, there is much of the old Adam still in Samson. Samson makes his resolve to go to the Philistines' hall of feasting and to perform feats to entertain the idolatrous enemies celebrating their god Dagon as a sudden onrush of impulse.

> – I begin to feel
> Some rousing motions in me, which dispose
> To something extraordinary my thoughts.
> I with this messenger will go along. (ll. 1381-1384)

The sudden reversal of his earlier, repeated and firm rejection of the idea may seem to be prompted by a divine intimation overtaking him. But there is little active exercise of choice. The decision, however, also serves as Samson's pulling himself up short without going over the edge of despair. Samson's decision to go to perform feats at the Philistine's bidding is comparable to Hamlet's final resolve to go to the fencing match with Laertes in *Hamlet* in several respects. Both the decisions make crucial turning points in their stories. The resolves determine destiny, lead to their deaths and accomplishment at once of their long awaited but deferred or thwarted revenge tasks. Hamlet at the opposite pole from Samson in the intellectual spectrum, in introvert fashion, cogitates his decision and works out arriving at it.

> *Hamlet.* Not a whit, we defy augury; there is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. It if be now, it's not to come, if it is not to come, it will be now, if it is not now, yet it will come–the readiness is all.

Indeed, Milton seems to have worked in several

reminiscences from Shakespeare in *Samson*. Milton's rendering of Samson's state of mind may carry memories of Shakespeare's portrayal of Macbeth's torments of the mind.

> – restless thoughts, that, like a deadly swarm
> Of hornets armed, no sooner found alone
> But rush upon me thronging, and present
> Time past, what once I was, and what am now. (ll. 19-22)

More particularly,

> Thoughts, my tormentors, armed with deadly stings
> Mangle my apprehensive tenderest parts
> Exasperate, exulcerate, and raise
> Dire inflammation (ll. 623-626)

though, unlike Shakespeare, Milton sustains and elaborates it staying with the medical analogy for quite long. In the variety and modulation of styles in *Samson*, some expressions suggest a Shakespearian ring and inspiration, for instance, the words about the just departed giant Harapha

> His giantship is gone, somewhat crestfallen (l. 1244)

So does the comparison of Delilah to a fully-rigged, stately ship; though the comparison has a general literary lineage extending to Congreve, it recalls Shakespeare's Cleopatra. Again, the emphasis in the Semichronis's speech (ll. 1670-1686) on the motif of the 'enginer hoist with his own petard', also reminds us of the end situation in *Hamlet*, and of the general entailment of the perishing of the revenge hero in the very moment of his fulfillment of revenge in the destruction wrought as a consequence. Moreover, in the utterance of the Semichorus there is a strong impression of the traditional convention of the *dans macabre*, the Dance of Death, in which death overtakes the pleasure-seekers by surprise in the very moment of pleasure. The note of 'calm of mind' struck in the closing utterances of Manoa and the Chorus is based on the sense that God has fulfilled himself in the way of Samson's end; 'nothing in his life became him so well as the leaving of it,' to use the words in *Macbeth* (l. 4.6-7). The stress in the Semichorus's obituary on Samson is on his newly 'roused' or 'raised' 'virtue', 'virtue' both in the root sense of 'power', 'value' or 'essential quality' the ideal quality and the Roman sense of 'valour'. This 'rousing' is compared to the

periodical renewal of the Phoenix, the 'secular bird' that lives for all the ages, by rising into new life from fire. The Phoenix was also regarded as a 'figure' of Christ and his symbol in the *Philologus* tradition, as witness the Old English *Physiologus* and Anglo-Saxon poem *Phoenix*.

The thickening of motifs and different orientations in the poem, at times bewildering, may also be regarded as characteristic of the final phase in a great writing or artistic career like Milton's as in the case of Shakespeare and several other masters. It is the kind of feature that Dryden speaks of in the prefatory part of his *A Preface to Fables*.

A concept which comes up with reiterative force in *Samson* is the idea of Samson being one of God's specially chosen; lines driving home this idea recur (ll. 23-31, 357-366, 634-640 and particularly 675-681). Milton early in his life got attracted to the Puritan, Calvinist idea of salvation by predestination or salvation by election exclusively for the Lord's elect. But instead of taking over the idea wholesale in the manner of Puritans like John Bunyan, Milton seems to have made his individual adaptation of the idea of predestination or of being God's chosen, by shifting the emphasis to God's marking out certain persons, like him, as destined to pursuits of the highest worth which would lead to a monumental achievement. He had a sense of destiny in poetry, and also in politics, and his was a dedicated life. Samson's sense of destiny, his active consciousness of his being a person 'separate to God', as made clear by the Angel twice appearing to herald his birth, is late-born and retrospective coming as it does to him in his very last phase, after he is blinded, enslaved and humiliated.

Given the view of the poem postulated in this paper, Milton appears to present Samson as at a certain remove, such a distancing issues from the typological gradation by which Samson is placed by Milton in the long-range view. The poet, at the same time, conveys enough of a sense of Samson's agony, not to mention a sufficient impression of Samson being an 'agon' in the old Greek sense a competitor in contests, a literary or athletic performer or a wrestler and pugilist or a struggler, 'striving, agonizing to do', to adapt Browning's phraseology in 'Andrea Del Sarto'. Milton, however, does not identify with Samson. The surface similarities

consisting in blindness, marital misadventure and political discomfiture are there, and once these led some readers to see Milton in Samson. But the differences such as the far greater inwardness of Milton, his much more highly evolved Christian religious sensibility and his totally different attitude to his blindness are predominant. It may be granted, though, that the lines where Samson bemoans his blindness carry the charge of felt experience for being written by Milton (for example, ll. 80-88).

Besides its shuffling of perspectives within itself, the poem is likely to be read in different perspectives by different kinds and groups of readers. There is no space to discuss this question except to raise it. For example, the feminist reader may react sharply to Samson on his wives, and more so, to Milton's rendering of the encounter in the poem between Samson and Delilata. The Palestinian may find it hard to keep attuned to the poem. The Zionist may find Milton's underlying subtly ironical attitude to the Hebrew dispensation not very likeable. Also, in today's terror-stricken world where people 'live dangerously', what with terror attacks and disastrous strikes by suicide bombers impelled by religious fanaticism, Samson's final act may be too close for comfort to the way of the suicide-bomber.

The gradation by which Milton may be said to measure Samson, should not be taken as implying irreverence or a dismissive attitude on his part to the Hebrew lore and tradition and its wisdom. Scholars such as Denis Saurat have shown that Milton was well acquainted with Hebrew lore, even of the esoteric variety like the *Kabbalah*, in his early life and career. Yet in his late poems *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, in a manner similar to his total eschewing of allusion to and figures of classical myth of which he made such memorable poetic use in the earlier poems, Milton seems to adopt an implicit, placing approach to the Old Testament dispensation.

NOTE

The Milton citations are from the text in Charles Williams's Oxford University Press World's Classics series edition, *The English Poems of John Milton*.

GABRIEL HARVEY, SPENSER'S "VERY SINGULAR GOOD FRIEND"

Leonard R.N. Ashley

Gabriel Harvey (*c.* 1550-1630), now obscure but a European humanist of importance in his time, was a man of low birth but determination and abilities. Like other scholars of his era he found a refuge and social advancement in classical scholarship. Harvey's subject of rhetoric had long been thought to be the principal tool of politicians, in parliament, the courts of royalty, or the courts of law, therefore useful to the ruling class. The universities of Oxford and Cambridge, as was common in Renaissance Europe, were not very much interested in research. They operated in a protected backwater, out of step with the careerist designs of the self-fashioning New Men who had not very much real respect for dons in their ivory towers engaged with old texts. A few well placed persons might gain socially from becoming patrons of scholars. Men of action, however, cared little for pedants. It was considered more profitable to get out and raid the Spanish galleons for the gold of the New World, not dusty classics.

Still, Harvey lived in an age dedicated to disparaging new manners in preference for the old. The classics were revered by some. Harvey's marginalia and drafts (see Relle and Nielson) give us unusual insight into a Renaissance scholar's library, as Stern proves. Harvey can contribute to our understanding of Elizabethan academic and literary worlds, literary history and biography, poetical fads and polemical fights. This paper surveys the scholarship on Harvey, none of it very recent, and argues for more attention, although Harvey is admittedly a minor figure, prolific but tangential.

In the literature of his England, Harvey gives us biographical detail on other Englishmen, though Quitslund suggests Harvey is unreliable regarding Spenser. Huffman shows Harvey connected to Florio. Austin and Edge connect Harvey to two men named Thomas Watson and Schrickx's writings and slighter material from Tobin connect Harvey to Shakespeare. Indeed, Harvey was connected with many writers, both academic and journalistic, and to many public figures. He was interested in many fields including

classics, education, language (on which see Helgerson & Tonkin) and debate in the feisty and opinionated style of Bishop Bale and others who loved controversy. Quinn shows Harvey was fascinated by astrology and necromancy. In addition, Harvey appeals to modern critical emphases on mentoring and friendship, the canon and the curriculum, critical combat, professional writing, as Friedenreich notes.

Gabriel Harvey might not have wished to be a mere bridge, except between the ancients and the moderns. He would not be pleased to discover that other ways than his of handling the revival of classicism eventually triumphed nor that he is remembered if at all as a pompous friend of Spenser and vilified for attacking Robert Greene and then meeting his match at the hands of another of the University Wits, England's "young Juvenal," Thomas Nashe, as Jordan and others recall . We focus on Harvey because his case adds something to our understanding of matters relevant to Continental literatures of his period which will reward further scholarship and writers more important than Harvey himself. Harvey was an academic, lawyer, polemical writer, even perhaps author of a *roman à clef* of revenge. He figures in a number of literary genres, from pamphleteering and prose satire to poetic theory and satirical drama, and in both English and Neo-Latin, thus related to supranational issues larger than his bumpy academic career or his literary life or his eventual profession as a provincial physician.

Henry Morley argues for Harvey thus:

> He did not become a great man, or what he called a 'megalander;' we may, if we will, class him as a fossil or extinct in literature – its megaterium or dodo. But in his day he worked hard, aspired nobly, and left witness to his labour and aspiration. Perhaps we do not care, for his own sake, to read the evidence, but set him aside as one of the small matters, if any there be, in which it is not worth while to be just. Then let him have the advantage of being not merely Gabriel Harvey, although to him that was something, but also Spenser's Hobbinol, which to us is more. He was, during some important years, the poet's 'long-approved and singular good friend' and counsellor. The counsel was outgrown, but not the friendship. To our credence as well as Harvey's, Spenser has left what he once called 'the eternal memory of our everlasting friendship, the inviolable memory of our unspotted friendship, the sacred memory of our vowed friendship;' and it is a little due perhaps to Spenser that we

should ascertain how much credit is due to the commentators who would have us think that he wrote in this way to a conceited pedant seven years older than himself.

Harvey's wide interests associated him not only with Neo-Latin literature (in elegies for a patron, Sir Thomas Smith, in *Gabrielis Harueii Valenatus:Smithus*, 1578) but also with contemporaries who were famous as playwrights in the Age of Shakespeare. Harvey's satire of the earl of Oxford got him into trouble from which the earl of Leicester had to extricate him and Harvey's attack in *Fovre Letters* (1592) on the dying Greene, as Jordan says, earned Harvey the rude riposte of Nashe's *Strange Newes of the Intercepting certaine Letters* (1592). That, exacerbated by Harvey's brother Richard's attack on Greene among others, launched a bitter battle between Nashe and Harvey, Harvey replying in *Pierces Supererogation* in 1593 and also to Nashe's virulent *Have with You to Saffron-Walden, or Gabriel Harvey's Hunt is Up* (1596). It was as a physician that Harvey appears to have devoted the last 30 years of his life after retreating to his native Saffron Walden, trounced by Nashe and leaving The Stationers' Company infuriated at them both. wounded severely by what Shakespeare would call paper bullets of the brain. Ambitious, Harvey ended in obscurity, "made a great noise in his time" (Wood: 128).

Like Shakespeare, Harvey was born in a provincial town to a father who was a businessman–Shakespeare's father made gloves, Harvey's rope. Harvey's father John held the highest office in Saffron Walden (Essex) in 1572 and dead was recorded as a gentleman "whose honesty no neighbour can impeach," (Grosart in his edition of *Four Letters*, 1: 160). John Harvey and his wife had two daughters and at least four sons, three of whom (Gabriel, Richard, and John) were sent up to Cambridge University with some assistance from generous friends or relations. All John Harvey's sons attended the local grammar school (established 1525) and Gabriel was the cleverest student. Nashe, never in diatribe to be completely trusted, says that at grammar school Gabriel was the apple of the schoolmaster's eye, an expert at a "faire Romane hande" and a dabbler in ballad writing, an argumentative youth,

contentious, quarrelsome, and "a desperate stabber with penknives". Gabriel entered Christ's College, Cambridge on 28 June 1566. He received the degree of bachelor of arts in 1569/70 standing ninth out of the 114 in the *ordo senioritatis*. Having failed to be elected a fellow of Christ's, Harvey used connections to become, 3 November 1570, a fellow of Pembroke College. He claimed to be a relative of Sir Thomas Smith (1513 - 1577), also of Saffron Walden and Cambridge (fellow of Queen's College 1530, master of arts 1533, public orator 1538, *regius* professor of civil law, vice-chancellor 1544). Sir Thomas' love of classical languages that Harvey, skilled in Latin, used to connect to this powerful Cambridge patron. Sir Thomas helped to pay Gabriel's bills at the university and secured him a fellowship at Pembroke. Anthony à Wood says.

Harvey was at Pembroke when Spenser finished at the Merchant Taylors' School, a charitable foundation of a London guild set up a grammar school in 1561 with Richard Mulcaster as head-master, and Spenser entered the college as a sizar, which means basically as a charity case, on 20 May 1569. Spenser was three years behind Harvey academically. Spenser admired Harvey's scholarship while Harvey highly regarded the series of sonnets which the young Spenser had anonymously published just a little earlier. Harvey seems to have become a mentor to Spenser. Moore Smith reported that at this time Harvey was a brilliant student and not the carping pedant he was later to become. Moore Smith claimed (p. 10) that Harvey's faults had then not been so obvious, and Judson in his life of Spenser (1:37) claimed Spenser "was prone to see the best in his friends" so "Harvey's defects may not have greatly mattered". In a footnote (4: 285), James Russell Lowell (4: 285) attempts to explain the Harvey-Spenser friendship with this regarding Harvey:

> Among the pedantic farrago of his omnisufficiency (to borrow one of his [Havey's] own words) we come suddenly upon passages whose gravity of sentiment, stateliness of movement, and purity of diction remind us of [Walter Savage] Landor. These lucid intervals in his [Harvey's] overweening vanity explain and justify the friendship of Spenser.

Rather than say that Spenser was attracted to a man with simi-

lar qualities, literary skill and personal vanity, J. Bass Mullinger in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (20) writes of a passing master-pupil relationship: "Harvey, by virtue of his seniority, superior position, and real scholarship, exercised over his friend's youthful genius an influence from which the latter with difficulty shook himself free"—or used and then discarded. Harvey for his part is assumed to have appreciated the promise and enjoyed the attention of the young Spenser. Sir Sidney Lazarus Lee (p. 161) opines: "Harvey reinforced in his pupil a passion for classical learning, which the boy had acquired at school, and encouraged him to pursue a study of French and Italian literature, to which on his own initiative he [Spenser] had already devoted his leisure". From Harvey, Spenser derived direction. Harvey "no doubt felt the attraction of his genius and lofty character; and between the two sprang up a friendship in which each had much to give and much to receive". Spenser, a clothmaker's son, and Harvey, the rope-maker's son, as was mentioned above, equally confronted the university's snobbery. McKerrow, editing Nashe, writes 5: 69):

> He [Harvey] was not quite strong enough man to forget that he was the son of a rope-maker, or to compel others to forget it. He was conscious that he ought to be judged on his own merits, but he just failed to enforce such judgment. Earlier when the Universities were more cut off from the life of the nation at large [and basically devoted to preparing men for the clergy], or later when more liberal notions prevailed, he might have succeeded. He had the ill-luck to come into residence at a time when a university training began to be looked upon as a necessary equipment for the sons of noble families, and when consequently birth and social standing were things which could not be ignored.

Liberal ideas had not by any means reached the stage at which being born poor made the papacy more glittering a goal or being born in a log cabin was a qualification and not a hurdle on the way to a presidency. Still, the Renaissance had some equivalents of the Horatio Alger boys "born to rise" and were the better for having to win by "pluck and luck". One cannot fail to notice that Harvey was criticized not so much for his origins as for his pedantry and pride, petulance and pushiness.

Just how unpopular Harvey was is illustrated by the fact that

when it came time for him to be elected master of arts, in March, 1573, he could not obtain the necessary votes from the other fellows of his college. Harvey was charged with being haughty and hypercritical, unsociable and impolite, and a defender of puritans and precisians, as well as daring to defend paradoxes against the tenets of Aristotelianism. Harvey recites their objections in a letter he wrote to the master of Pembroke. Harvey denied the charge that he was "not familiar as a fellow" and "did disdain everi mans cumpani" (*Letter-Book*, 2) and countered that he had always been "as sociable and as gud a fellow too, as ani" . He claims that, his associates having proved distant from him, he was forced to withdraw ("although not greatly nether") from their company. Because of the difficulties he encountered, Harvey had been forced, he pleaded, to built a wall with his schoolbooks between other scholars and himself.

Never once do we find criticism of Harvey as scholar. He was a Porson, an eminent academic, a profound student and an excellent and popular lecturer. He was industrious and intelligent but he could not, or would not, move modestly in society, especially among fellows who substituted bonhomie for brains. Seemingly without effort Harvey made scholarly progress and enemies in about equal amounts. Judson in his biography of Spenser remarks (p. 37) that Harvey was a man in whom

> clay was mixed with the gold; he was tactless, egotistical, arrogant, vain; beauty and fancy meant little to him; he was without self-criticism.

Harvey was a proud censorious spirit, conscious of his own abilities, dismissive of those of others. The fellows of Pembroke College turned against the quarrelsome Harvey for his vanity.

For months passed it looked as if he would not receive the master's degree. Then Humphrey Tinsdale (fellow of Pembroke and later president of Queen's) arrived from London and, despite resistance, pushed the matter through the university senate. Harvey got his master's degree but forever afterwards he was embittered regarding his associates at Cambridge even as he was appointed lecturer in Greek by Dr. Young (master of Pembroke) in 1573. About a year later (23 April 1574) Harvey became professor of rhetoric and oratory.

George Saintsbury (p. 232) nevertheless dismissed Harvey as "emphatically of Mr [Thomas] Carlyle's 'acrid-quack' genus". Harvey's lectures evince considerable research and thought. They exhibit an apparently sincere love of ciceronics. Unfortunately, Harvey is too lacking in *festivitas* to appreciate the 174 jokes of Cicero, dealt with brightly by Gioviano Pontano in his then popular *De Sermone* (1502). Stressing that the serious student must learn dialectic as well as rhetoric from Cicero, these lectures of Harvey's present not merely proof of an education but a theory of education, a sober one. Harvey was a rhetorician, but no poet.

In Harvey's Renaissance culture his command of Latin was admired. He was chosen to dispute in Latin before Elizabeth, who understood the language, when the queen held court at the great estate of Audley's End on 26 July 1578. Harvey (according to Isaac) outdid himself and, according to Nashe, appeared on that royal occasion in velvet. He bowed and scraped to the dignitaries and his supreme moment came when the queen permitted him to kiss her hand. Nashe says Harvey "quite renounsed his naturall English accents and gestures, & wrested himselfe wholly to the Italian puntillios, speaking our homely lland tongue strangely, as if he were but a raw practioner in it, & but ten daies before had entertained a school-master to teach him how to pronounce it". Moore Smith editing *Marginalia* (p. 20) continues to say that Harvey's fawning and affectation elicited proper contempt and ridicule but that

> Harvey himself was unaware that he had exposed himself to ridicule. He rejoiced in his apparent conquest of all-powerful friends, and when all was over, sat down to complete his success by celebrating in verse the events in which he had played a part. So we have from his pen a new volume of facile Latin verse, the *Gratulationes Valdinenses*.

Harvey fancied himself a poet. His verses are in four books, all in flawless Latin, otherwise unremarkable.

Egotism blinded Harvey even to self-interest. Harvey was actually greater than Nashe allowed, but Harvey was always the very first to admit that. Nashe jibed at Harvey's provincial origin–he advised Harvey to go back to Saffron Walden–but there was more to be objected to than that. When the term of Harvey's fellowship at Pembroke expired, despite the efforts Leicester himself

made at Harvey's earnest request, the fellowship was not renewed. Harvey then applied for a fellowship at Christ's College, which was refused. Through a fortunate circumstance, and thanks to the master of Trinity Hall, a Henry Harvey with whom Gabriel Harvey claimed some kinship, Gabriel Harvey obtained a most welcome fellowship at Trinity Hall on 18 December 1578. Trinity Hall was the seat of legal studies at Cambridge and for some time Gabriel Harvey had been saying he would like to drop divinity and concentrate on law. Law was a quick way ahead, as we see in the case of Sir Francis Bacon and other New Men of Elizabeth's time.

Harvey was not only managing his own career but also was advising Spenser on his. Spenser had recently been disappointed in a love affair, and as Sir Sidney Lazarus Lee noted (p. 97) "Gabriel Harvey strongly urged on him the prudence of seeking a career in the capital". Harvey, convinced he had powerful friends in high places, said he would help. Harvey offered to use his connection to the queen's favorite, the earl of Leicester, the uncle of Sir Philip Sidney. Harvey gave Spenser an introduction to the earl and this helped Spenser's career. Thus Spenser became secretary to Dr. Young, master at Pembroke five years earlier and now the new bishop of Rochester. Spenser also gained admission to the Leicester circle and was seen in residence at Penshurst and at Leicester's grand London residence in The Strand. Later on, Spenser parlayed this into the private secretaryship of Arthur, Lord Grey de Wilton. That took Spenser abroad when his employer was made lord lieutenant of Ireland in August of 1580. In the event, Spenser's residence in Ireland produced some prose writings that do not do a great deal to make us love this great poet. All this networking may seem tedious to some readers here but it does make a significant point about certain relations between life and literature of the Renaissance.

As for Spenser, Harvey, who had so many enemies, proved a very useful friend, "a warm and helpful friend," asserts Bourne (p. 413). Spenser seemed well on his way to patronage by the powerful, without which few poets of the era could do very well. Shakespeare and Nashe somewhat benefited from the patronage

of the earl of Southampton. Lyly and some others did not receive the patronage they wanted. "Without Sidney's help," writes Bourne in the same place, perhaps too dramatically, "the author of 'The Faerie Queene' would have trudged but lamely through the world". A monument to the friendship is the character of Hobbinol (Harvey) in *The Shepheardes Calendar.* High regard for Harvey appears in the January, April, June, and December eclogues of this first truly important work by Spenser, published (anonymously) in 1579 and dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney. The work is prefaced by an open letter addressed by the editor (E. K., probably Edward Kirke) "to the most excellent and learned, both orator and poet, Mayster Gabriel Harvey".

E.K. heaps praise on Harvey for "mighty Rhetorick and your other rare gifts of learning" and to me seems to be preparing the public for some verse which Harvey appears to be thinking of publishing soon. E.K., effusively complimentary rather than critical, writes in a postscript to the prefatory letter to *The Shepheardes Calendar:*

> Now I trust, M[aster] Harvey, that upon sight of your speciall friends and fellow Poets doings, or else for envie of so many unworthy Quidams, which catch at the garlond which to you alone is dewe, you will be perswaded to pluck out of the hateful darknesse those so many excellent English poemes of yours which lye hid, and bring them forth to eternall light. Trust me, you doe both them great wrong, in depriving them of the desired sonne; and also your selfe, in smoothering your deserved prayses; and all men generally, in witholding from them so divine pleasures, which they might conceive of your gallant verse, as they have already doen of your Latine Poemes, which, in my opinion, both for invention and elocution are very delicate and superexcellent. And thus againe I take my leave of good Mayster Harvey.

With geniuses such as Spenser, embarrassed critics play down the patronage game. Very minor figures such as Harvey enable us to glimpse the true nature of the patronage system, whether it shows its true colors in vapid courtly poetry or in the fact that the playwrights, writing for the pennies of the groundlings, also had often, as "masterless men," to seek the support of Lord Strange or some grander but unworthy protector. To the pleasing of upstart patrons Renaissance arts owe not only their grandeur but also

their frequent meretricious grandiosity. Renaissance art was not always well served by its reliance on the borrowed authority of the ancients and its servile catering to the dictates of men with more power and money than taste or refinement. If modern art stoops to masscult, Renaissance art also has its problems derived from its backers.

In the competitive world of Renaissance earning of fame by the pen, with its desperate seeking for advancement and craven currying of favor, occasionally with hiding behind pseudonymns or anonymity, with some works alleged to have been given to the printer allegedly without the knowledge of the "humble" writer, there was plenty to encourage what Moore Smith, editing the *Marginalia* (pp. 25 - 26), calls in Harvey "a certain inclination to finesse and trickery". In fact, Harvey's English poetry scattered through his *Letter-Book*, whether in halting hexameters or Skeltonian doggerel, ought to have stayed in "hateful darnesse," for it was clumsy, often tasteless, and had no merit beyond copious vocabulary. If Harvey really agreed that this stuff ought to see the light of day, Harvey lacked self-criticism. Grosart, introducing the *Works* (I: L) observed that "his 'rhetoric' [was] magniloquent rather than eloquent, his verse fluent and smooth, but without inspiration...his books a tomb, not a monument". As we read we find too often that Harvey's verse was particularly pedestrian and labored. His indisputable learning and undoubted industry were expended on polishing a worthless piece of lead, not silver, until the reader could see his face in it, shuddering. The best that can be said of Harvey is that he does not make the grammatical errors that Milton commits in his Latin poetry, the more surprising because Milton was a Latinist, secretary for foreign tongues to Oliver Cromwell. In English, Harvey is too latinate.

Harvey was a pedant even in his word-war with Nashe in which Harvey was at his prose best. Harvey's style, D'Israeli noted, was always that of the "scholastic cynic," and witty, agile Nashe danced rings around the ponderous Harvey. Spenser, himself guilty of all the ink-horn terms that mar his masterpiece–and, one of my undergraduate students once said, a man with a nine-line stanza and usually a three- or five-line idea–ventured to praise Harvey's

verse. Spenser should have rejected it. Tact or friendship blinded him.

Harvey was himself unable to see his own limitations. Reveling in the praise of his friends, basking in their compliments that enabled his self-love, he published a collection of panegyrics on himself. If only Shakespeare and Webster and Heywood and other Elizabethan dramatists had had enough vanity to collect and preserve all their papers for posterity! In 1580, long letters by Harvey and two shorter ones from Spenser (see Goldberg) were allegedly leaked to the press (Goldberg). Grateful as we are to have anything more from Spenser, this publication was unwelcome in that it did not make Harvey look as good as he expected. Written between October 1579 and May of the next year, the letters were published in two groups, "Three proper and wittie familiar Letters" and "Two Other very commendable Letters". They are commending, not commendable.

On 15/16 October 1579, Spenser wrote to Harvey from Westminster. Spenser mentioned that poets very successful in rhyme such as himself, including Sir Philip Sidney and Edward Dyer (famous for verses beginning "My mind to me a kingdom is" and not for half-hearted classical imitations) were toying with the idea of writing English verse in classical meters, measured quantitatively and without rhyme. Apparently before Spenser went to London he and Harvey had discussed the possibility of this. "I am, of late," Spenser writes, "more in loue with my Versifying than with Rhyming: which I should haue done long since, if I would then haue followed your councell." Roger Ascham (*The Schoolmaster*) and Harvey had embraced the idea but Spenser had declined until powerful persons at court found the idea attractive. Spenser was also encouraged in this foolish venture by the learned Thomas Drant, archdeacon of Lewes, who provided Spenser and his friends in London with details of Latin rules of quantity and versifying. Spenser commenced to write English hexameters according to a system inimical to English and even to Romance languages despite the arguments of those who wanted sixteenth-century poetry to look as classical as possible, notably Claudio Tolomei (*Versi e regole*

della nuova poesia toscana, 1539) and Jacques de la Taille (*La Manière de faire des verses en françois, comme en grec et en latin*, 1573).

Harvey claimed to be getting back from the medieval to the classical in verse and generally was given the title of father of English hexameters. People ignored Drant and the earlier Ascham who wrote: "how our English tongue, in avoiding barbarous riming [by adopting blank verse iambic pentameter], may as well receive right quantity of syllables and true order of versifying...as either Greek or Latin, if a cunning man have its handling". Clearly Spenser's impetus was the picking up of this idea at court, not the university. "I perceiue you...continue your old exercise of Versifying in English," Spenser wrote to Harvey, "which glorie I had now thought should haue bene only ours heere at London and the Court." The court was too much the slave of fashion.

Rhyme got a boost in England when The Renaissance writers such as the earl of Howard and Sir Thomas Wyatt introduced stanza forms based on Italian, in which rhyming is easier than in English. Rhyme was masterfully handled by Spenser and his London colleagues, so it is hard to see that anything but fad recommended the oddity of hobbling hexameters. In time even the sonnet from Italy was given the so-called Shakespearian improvement: rhyming is made less challenging and a final couplet ends with a flourish for emphasis. New spelling and pronunciation, as de la Taille admits, would be required for English hexameters, quantitative verse. The most notable effort in English hexameters was not Harvey's at all but Richard Stanyhurst's translation of *The First Foure Books of Vergil his Aeneis*, first printed at Leyden (1582) and appearing in London the next year. Nashe detested it. Nashe denounced hexameters as a "foul, lumbering, boysterous, wallowing measure" and this work by Stanyhurst is the epitome, replete with incredible orthography, idiotic coinages, and nonsense lines.

Harvey replied to Spenser's letter from "Trinitie Hall, still in my gallerie" on 23 October 1579, jealous of and insulting Archdeacon Drant (as "gorbellied") and sneering at his quantitative rules, for a copy of those seem to have accompanied the letter from Spenser.

Harvey makes mention in this letter of Spenser going abroad in the service of Leicester, and this seems to explain why after October 1579 there was a break in the Spenser/Harvey correspondence until the following April. In his next letter (which Spenser dated 2 April 1580), Spenser refers in passing to an earthquake in London. Spenser goes on to explain how he and Sidney improved upon Drant's rules. Enthusiastic as Spenser is about quantitative meter he appears to be abandoning it because he mentions in the same letter that he has begun *The Faerie Queene*, with its iambics and rhymes (pentameter *ababbcbc* and a wrap up hexameter *c*), his own invention if borrowing from Italian *terza rima* and from Chaucer's linked octaves in *The Monk's Tale.*

In Harvey's next letter (which, dated 7 April 1580, must have crossed in the post) there is a disquisition on earthquakes which Harvey had delivered, in the midst of a card party no less, at the time of the event. This was probably at Saffron Walden. The main point in this letter of Harvey's is near the end where he includes an acrimonious attack on university methods and discipline and scurrilously goes after one individual, who is left unnamed. Actually, the target is Dr. Andrew Perne , graduate and fellow of Cambridge (1540), vice-chancellor on various occasions (1551, 1556, 1559, 1574, and in 1580), a man widely known as "Andrew Turncoat" for his Vicar-of-Bray-like changes in order to stay in favor over both Protestant and Catholic reigns: a coat that was turned came to be called perned. Though Harvey did not name Perne trouble was later to come from that attack on "your olde Controllers new behaviour". Harvey excoriated, as Grosart shows in the *Works* (I: 72),

> "[a] busy head and dizy head, a brazen forehead: a leaden braine: a wooden wit: a copper face: a stony breast: a facetious and eluish heart: a founder of noueltie: a confounder of his owne, and his friends good gifts: a morning bookworm, an afternoon meltworm: a right luggler, as ful of his fleights, wyles, fetches, casts of Legerdemaine, toyes to mock Apes withal, odde shiftes, and nauish practizes, as his skin can holde. He often telleth me, he looueth me as himself, but out lyer out, thou lyest abhominably in thy throat.

This shows Harvey at vituperative, vilifying full throttle, though he was never as clever or as focused as Nashe in contention. Harvey

uses the dagger of insult and the cudgel of vocabulary, while Nashe's weapon is usually the Damascene blade of a flashing rapier of wit.

In the last of the five letters Harvey includes several examples of his own verse. One is *Speculum tuscanismi*, a satire on the Italianate Englishman. There are also several sets of verses done for him by his younger brother, John, then a teenager and a second-year student at Queen's College. On verses, Harvey sets out a sensible if uninspired discussion of the laws of the anglicized hexameter and quantitative measure. The first thing to do, he asserts, is to reform English spelling to render it more conformable to speech; this is in effect a plea for phonetic spelling. Harvey objects to Drant's rules which would lengthen, for the hexameters, syllables which are naturally short in English. We cannot, for instance, lengthen the middle syllables to create carpénter, merchándise, or suddénly. The stress forced upon the wrong syllable in English verse suggests incompetence. It usually raises laughter. An example here: that is deliberately is accomplished in this anonymous limerick on the patron and promoter of Irish (and self) Lady Gregory:

> There was a kind Lady named Gregory
> Who cried, "Come all poets in beggary".
> But she found her imprudence
> When hundreds of students
> Cried "We 're in that noble catégory".

Moore Smith claims that Harvey is not being pedantic but is warning Spenser and his friends against the dry-as-dust of Drant, but, although Harvey is more sensible than Drant in this, Harvey's tone is that of a pedant, too. His personal attacks on "gorbellied" Drant are crude, albeit not so vile as his attacks elsewhere on Perne, Greene, Marlowe, the Countess of Pembroke (see McCarthy), and others. Perhaps worse is Harvey's faint praise in this letter for *The Faerie Queene*, which he thinks inferior to some of Spenser's other work, now lost, which apparently followed Harvey's odd ideas.

Fortunately for us all, though no thanks to Harvey, Spenser was not moved by his mentor's criticism. If Spenser left off working on his masterpiece it was because of his duties as secretary to Lord Grey de Wilton, not because of Harvey's casting cold water

on the project and what has been described as its "grand style". Insofar as Harvey did cause Spenser to pause we must credit Harvey with persuading Spenser to postpone work on *The Faerie Queene* until Spenser was older and more mature.

Critics have been censorious of Harvey, so lest we paint too black a picture of him here we must mention that the marginalia which he scribbled so neatly and so industriously in his books do indeed reward attention. Besides undoubtedly underlining the man's deficiencies they do also show some of his good qualities. From the *Marginalia*, in fact, we get a more favorable impression of Harvey than from anything else he wrote. *Marginalia* he wrote for himself, basically.

We traced Harvey's relationship with Spenser through a "bright morning," a friendship remarkable when one considers that Harvey was incapable of being a truly astute or sympathetic critic of Spenser's art. Harvey's interests, his ideas and ideals, his own talents, his very conception of art–all were in significant respects widely divergent from that of the young Spenser.

We can now be much briefer with a discussion of Harvey's "troubled noonday" and "long dull evening". Still the names of scholars will multiply; even if you do not need these references note the point that Harvey has been extensively noticed by scholars.

Those imprudently if not impudently published Spenser/Harvey letters came in for a great deal of ridicule and censure. It was widely thought, it seems, that Harvey was putting into print personal stuff which had no place there. Harvey suggested that a third party had, as we would say today, leaked the letters to the press, but Harvey's self-promoting personality was too well known to make that credible. Moreover, Harvey criticized one of the two great universities. That was much resented. Also, the earl of Oxford, suspecting an attack on his dandyism in the *Speculum tuscanismi*, took personal affront. John Lyly, playwright and creator of euphuism, master of arts in 1579 of Cambridge, though an Oxford graduate, had some kind of grudge against Harvey, or perhaps some hope of preferment from Harvey's enemies. Sir James imagined that it was he and not Perne who was attacked in the letters, just because

of "your old Controller" in Harvey's text.

Perne, when master of Peterhouse, was not of Spenser's college at Cambridge but Spenser may have in some manner have fallen into Perne's disfavor when Perne was vice-chancellor of the university. Sir James was just another kind of "old Controller". Harvey said of the earl of Oxford (Grosart, *Works* II: 122) "in truth I looued him, in hope praysed him; many wayes fauoured him, and neuer in any way offended him," but the arrows of satire can occasionally go off course, of course. Neither Oxford nor Croft were persons who took slights, clear or suspected, calmly. Harvey was in the Elizabethan equivalent of hot water. Nashe reports (McKerrow's *Works*, III: 78) that Croft took revenge by having Harvey thrown into The Fleet prison. In *A Quip for an Upstart Courtier* (1592), Greene, hating to have himself and his fellow University Wits characterized as "piperly make-plays" in Harvey's brother Richard's *Astrological Discourse*, writes that Harvey was "orderly clapped in the Fleet". Harvey denies that. The truth is unclear, as in many pamphlet wars then, theological or otherwise. Harvey had to make many apologies, stress his dutiful respect. To attempt to pacify Croft, Harvey had to identify Perne as his target, calling Perne "the olde Fox" responsible for Harvey being denied the oratorship of Cambridge. The election for that post we must examine now.

The troubles over the orator job came to a head in the summer of 1580. Harvey, returning from Saffron Walden, learned of the vacancy and wrote to Lord Burghley, in Latin (Lansdowne MS 28, 85), asking for the job. Burghley promised his support, though unconvinced of the truth of Harvey's assertion that Perne had launched a campaign against Harvey's election. Harvey was certain that Perne had encouraged Bridgewater to remain in office so that Harvey's appointment as professor of rhetoric would have time to lose its luster. But, really, university opposition to Harvey was widespread. Some of Harvey's opponents disliked him so much that they mocked him in a university Latin play called *Pedantius*. In *Pedantius* a conceited pedant arrogantly swaggers as much as any *miles gloriosus*, and Harvey's personal mannerisms were imitated onstage to the delight of the "in" audience. It is another

example of a rather slight Renaissance theatrical genre in which contemporary jokes, now very obscure, once set the audience on a roar. Harvey's hopes were dashed. Anthony Wingfield, who may have had a hand in the play, was elected orator. Wingfield and Harvey were uncomfortable colleagues some three years later when Harvey was temporarily appointed and served for five months as junior proctor of the university. All this may seem to be a tempest in a teacup, but such academic quarrels were meat and drink to cloistered faculty in the Renaissance

Harvey's ambitions continued unabated. On 12 February 1584/5, Dr. Henry Harvey, whom we mentioned above, was buried. The mastership of Trinity Hall thus vacant, our Harvey yearned to be elected to that post. Some days passed and no move was made to elect a new master, so Harvey began to worry. Fearing the worst, Gabriel Harvey posted up to London and in person presented a letter to Lord Burghley in which Harvey claimed that the conditions of the election "were supposed more agreeable to me then any of my competitour," which was not true. In fact, odds were strongly against Harvey being chosen by his colleagues. "Truly, my Lord," Harvey complained, "there is no scholler in Ingland of my continuaunce and traualye in study, that standeth in so slender condition, as myselfe," which may have been more nearly accurate. Then the masters of Clare, Jesus, St. Johns, and Peterhouse (this was Harvey's old enemy Perne) banded together to support the candidacy of the same Preston who, on Bridgewater's recommendation, had earlier contested the orator post with Harvey. Preston was recommended as "voyde of faction" . Harvey lost out again. This was the biggest disappointment of his whole academic career.

A MS in the library of the university at Cambridge (Baker MS 36, 107) throws considerable light on Harvey's character at this point. Thomas Baker writes accepting Harvey's inaccurate story that he was elected master but then deprived of the post:

> He was chosen Master but was supplanted by the cunning & conduct of some of the Heads [of other colleges], on one or more of w[hi]ch he reflects bitterly in his English works. He was a man of bright & lively parts & was once in favour with Lord Burleigh our Chancellor who recommended him hither for the

> Oratorship: but a flashy wit, a rambling Head, & a factious spirit ruin'd his [Harvey's] Interest here & put the Heads upon procuring the Queen's Mandat for a man of more peaceable temper.

In 1584, after seven years of the study of civil law, Harvey performed the exercise for his doctor's degree at Cambridge. Apparently he failed. In 1585 he obtained a leave of absence from Cambridge and tried examinations at Oxford, arrantly misrepresenting himself as "Master of Trin. H. Cambr." A note in Harvey's common-place book (Add. MSS 32, 494, 50 *recto*) suggests that Harvey broke down in his Acts at Oxford, but despite this "default" Harvey was admitted Doctor of Civil Law in the University of Oxford on 13 July.

At this point Harvey is some 35 years of age and had become a Doctor in the Court of Arches (but never practising law, if Nashe is right) and a DCL of Oxford. He has had, nevertheless, many setbacks, and yet he maintained his hopes of a great future. However, his worst defeat was on the way. He was about to suffer the "spur-galling of an ass" by the sarcastic, dashing, fiendishly destructive, quill-driver Thomas Nashe. Perkins wrote one version of the story. Harvey was about to get into literary history in somewhat the same way that various minor figures did in the famous Marprelate Controversy of the sixteenth century and indeed to acquire the dubious distinction of being immortalized by attack. Baugh's literary history (p. 440) compares Harvey's plight to that of a thin-skinned man in a nettle bed. Harvey could not take barracking as did the poet laureate Colley Cibber when Alexander Pope assailed him (Ashley). Harvey was no match for Nashe but would not quit.

"Open warrres" raged between Harvey and Nashe. In Nashe's works McKerrow devotes 35 pages to the confrontation which defy condensation without loss. See the new *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* for a brief update of a battle long ago. Nashe, by his unbridled skill and the very nature of his methods gives a distorted view of Harvey–and compels his victim to answer awkwardly. There is some truth in Nashe's cartooning, as there is in every good cartoon, the main features exaggerated and the observer supplying some of the nuances, omitted because of malice and to achieve

caustic simplicity. But one cannot accept Nashe's estimate as all truthful. Nashe's caricature should not be our only picture of Harvey.

In his war with Nashe *The Trimming of Thomas Nashe*, 1597 was Harvey's final sally. If, in fact, critics can agree to accept Harvey's authorship of that phillipic which names merely "the high-tituled patron Don Richardo de Medico campo". Harvey lived into old age. After the Nashe battle little is heard of him. He may have seen Spenser in later years in England. Hales even argues from the fact that Harvey appears as Hobbinol in *Colin Clout's Come Home Again* that Harvey may have visited Spenser during Spenser's time there. Certainty is impossible in this matter. Harvey's movements ceased to be tracked. Harvey's slight fame rapidly declined from the time when he was familiar enough to be caricatured on the stage in the late 1580's or early 1590s not for sophisticated readers of Virgil in translation but for the groundlings at the public playhouse of The Queen's Men.

Another University Wit like Lyly, George Peele, targets Harvey as a figure of fun in the first comedy in English to include literary criticism, *The Old Wives Tale*. Peele's play features Huanebango ("What a prating ass is this"). Huanebango represents Harvey. The play has been given various dates of composition, from the wild guesses of critics such as Frederick Gard Fleay to slightly more supported opinions. Certainly Harvey was attacked on the stage at some time or other and derided about his quantitative verse. Harvey wrote:

> I cordially recommend to the dere louers of the Muses, and namely, to the professed sonnes of the same, Edmund Spenser, Richard Stanihurst, Abraham France, Thomas Watson, Samuell Daniell, Thomas Nashe, and the rest, whom I affectionately thancke for their studious endeauvours commendably employed in enriching and polishing their native tongue...

The subject is what Harvey claims to his own "invention, the English hexameter". It was Stanyhurst's hexameter translation of Virgil, of course, that principally drew Peele's ridicule, shared by Nashe who said that Stanyhurst ("though otherwise learned") was silly and would "never had been praised by Gabriel [Harvey] for his labour, if therein he had not bin so famously absurd." It shows the Renaissance in its less well-advised uses of the classical heritage.

But personalities rather than poetics were to the fore. These matters were much better handled by George Puttenham, Sir John Harington, and others of the period.The pamphlet war between Harvey and Nashe was only one of a great many paper wars on topics ranging from theology and politics to theaters as sinks of sin, cozeners and vagabonds as dangerous or romantic figures, usury and venery and in Nashe's *The Anatomie of Abuses* of 1589, just about "everything in sight" (*Cf.* Hemninger.) But the Harvey/Nashe contretemps was particularly interesting and it grew so heated that in 1599 both of them unusually were silenced; after that date neither was permitted by the authorities to publish anything further on the subject. The censors decreed that "all Nashe's books and Dr, Harvey's books be taken [off sale], wheresoever they may be found, and that none of their books be ever printer thereafter."

So ended Gabriel Harvey's literary career. Harvey was exhausted. Nashe died in 1601 but in his last years was busy. Nashe easily recovered from the five months of imprisonment resulting from his government-shocking comedy (written in collaboration with Ben Jonson) *The Isle of Dogs* (1597, now lost) and pressed on. The Harvey/Nashe controversy gave spur to an Elizabethan inventiveness in invective and traditions of stuffiness of the cocksure arraigned against the vividness of expression of the cocky. Harvey's estimate of Nashe was wrong. In *Pierces Supererogation*, Harvey had dismissed Nashe's "stale inventions" as "grossly fell, and smelleth noysomly of the pumps, or a nastier thing," but Nashe became famous, and Harvey did not.

Harvey was antiquarian and ridiculous in his championing of a the ancient struggle of versifiers to get meaning into single units, double units, and so-called "common" (though less usual) units which could be either long or short, while, in elision and ecthlipsis vowels shorter than the average were not counted in the scansion. It was the classical aura, and a prevailing anti-Gothic mood, rather than the beauty or simplicity or effectiveness of all this, which must have perversely appealed to Harvey and those unwise enough to accept his encouragement in this dead-end hexameter project. Had Harvey succeeded in convincing Spenser to cast *The Faerie*

Queene in this style posterity should have lost a great, if unfinished, masterpiece. Had Spenser written in fourteener couplets, common in early English plays, the monotony would have been disastrous. Iambic is the natural heartbeat of English. It was a dramatist of Italian descent who introduced iambic pentameter into English drama and it was Shakespeare himself who made it the natural language of some of our greatest plays, especially after the jingle of ryhme in couplets was given up.

The idea of English hexameters died even before Gabriel Harvey, unlamented. The Baker MS (pp. 98 - 107) mentioned earlier records an elegy on Harvey (1630) written by one W. Pearson. Hardy died in that year after practicing "physic" in Saffron Walden for decades. Dying a disappointed old man far from eminence in public life, Harvey has had the posthumous misfortune of being denigrated ever since. This present article may suggest all the European ramifications of Harvey's life and works from the period. It is also a contribution to the scholarship on Harvey which ranges from dissertations such as Biller's to various scrappy notes and articles and a life by Stern. Consult *Literary Criticism from 1499 to 1800* for nearly 100 pages of excerpts from critics of Harvey. There is a 1913 book by Berli in German as well as a lot of nineteenth-century criticism, all passé, a 'seventies study by Stern in English, and more. See Harold Wilson for a brief summing up of Harvey as humanist. Scholarship needs to include Harvey in a fresh history of the Italian Renaissance and its influence upon England. In that connection, see such writers as Einstein and Spingarn. The English Renaissance is to be connected to the continental Renaissance– the very name in English derives, obviously, from French.

In conclusion we may stress that a minor literary character can still have importance. We have noted a few of Gabriel Harvey's good and bad qualities, especially his vanity. Vanity is often an engine for literary activity. We see how Harvey fitted into the humanists at Cambridge and how they compared with other humanists of The Renaissance. We have not bothered to go into his Ramist interests or to list all the classical writers he read, major and minor. We may also seek in Harvey, this particular minor writer,

somewhat typical of his day, some universals regarding minor writers in all cultures, their struggles in life and their productions in literature. We can learn something from this character who was a friend of a great genius but no such phenomenon himself. We cannot apply "genius" to Harvey, merely talent and erudition. It can be asserted that, first, he is a useful string on which to accumulate our thoughts in the supersaturated Renaissance literature so that we may the better consider what has been done and remains to be done by scholars; and, secondly, that Gabriel Harvey, for all his failings, remains one who has principally shone in a reflected glory. He was certainly not as described in a sonnet by Spenser. Spenser dated the sonnet Dublin 18 July, 1586 and called Harvey "happy above happiest men...sitting like a looker-on/ Of this world's stage," but Harvey, not so sage and nowhere near as serious, interesting as a prime example of the Renaissance classical scholar, is more significant as an associate of genius: he retains the distinction of having been the great Spenser's "Very Singular Good Friend".

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"THE ANXIETY OF INFLUENCE": SHELLEY'S INDEBTEDNESS TO SPENSER

K.K. Sharma

Harold Bloom's short book entitled *The Anxiety of Influence,* published about thirty-four years ago in 1973, at once attracted the critical attention all over the world, and little wonder even M.H. Abrams discussed it in *A Glossary of Literary Terms.*[1] But somehow it could not maintain its acclamation and authenticity for long, and now it is generally taken to be a work of passing interest and reference. The reasons, to my mind, are: there is a lot of hair-splitting in it; then it is heavily dependent upon psychology and abounds in psychological coinages which render it eclectic and cumbersome; and lastly it suffers from overstretching of inferences that makes the matter tedious. However, this interesting, influential study cannot be summarily rejected, for some of Bloom's assertions hold true in many cases, and Shelley's Spenserian heritage is an instance of it. Bloom's remarks at the very beginning of his treatise are pertinent to the subject under discussion:

> This short book offers a theory of poetry by way of a description of poetic influence, or the story of intra-poetic relationships....
>
> Poetic history, in this book's argument, is held to be indistinguishable from poetic influence, since strong poets make that history by misreading one another, so as to clear imaginative space for themselves.
>
> My concern is only with strong poets, major figures with the persistence to wrestle with their strong precursors, even to the death.[2]

I feel that in his literary relationship with, or let me call it indebtedness to, Spenser, Shelley — a 'strong' and major nineteenth century English poet —, as his expository writings, biographical studies and poetical works evince, is not free from the anxiety engendered in him by the influence of his illustrious predecessor; he seems to make a deliberate effort to show it to the minimum and conceal it as much as he can. In other words, what I intend to bring out in the present paper is that Shelley, despite Spenser's impact on him as much as on any other major poet of his times (including Keats), hides it, advertently and inadvertently, as much as he can.

Edmund Spenser, one of the most distinguished literary luminaries of the Elizabethan age, is doubtless the first truly great

English poet, endowed with unique poetic genius. In fact, he may be called the first comprehensive and, in a way, complete British poet in that he has excelled in almost all the varieties of poetic form — Lyric, Sonnet, Ode, Hymn, Epic, Allegory, Satire, Eclogue, Elegy, Fable, Epithalamion, Prothalamion, Masque, etc. — and also because he is sensuous, moral, intellectual and spiritual, all in one. In him we find a harmonious fusion of the old and the new — the Greek, Roman, French, Medieval and Renaissance elements —, the national and the international, and the temporal and the universal. Besides, being the master of language he contributed immensely to the proper growth of the English language and experimented successfully with varied forms of versification, evincing a lot of originality by inventing the nine-line poetic metre known after his name as the Spenserian stanza. Thus, it is not surprising that he has been acknowledged as 'the poets' poet' — the epithet first used for him by Charles Lamb. That is to say, he is a very outstanding poet, a master poet who has inspired many great poets. No wonder, then, if it is assumed and affirmed that Shelley as poet owes a lot to Spenser, but he has not admitted adequately, to the best of my knowledge, his indebtedness to Spenser, while almost all the notable English poets, from the inimitable Shakespeare down to the nineteenth century, have overtly recorded their acknowledgement to him. Thus, my aim in undertaking the present study is to argue that Spenser has influenced Shelley much more than what the 'Singing God' (to quote A.C. Swinburne's words) has himself admitted and what the critics have so far pointed out.

Before demonstrating the manifold impact of Spenser on Shelley's writings, I put forward the following arguments to accentuate the fact that Shelley, though immensely inspired and influenced by the great Elizabethan, has rather consciously tried to conceal much of his indebtedness to him. In the first place, it may be noted that there are records (in the letters particularly) of Shelley's having read almost all the significant works in English as well as in Greek, Latin, German, French and Spanish, for he was a voracious reader and an intellectual glutton, who, as he wrote in a letter to

Thomas Jefferson Hogg, could "devote 6 hours in the day to study without difficulty"[3] and who would "furnish our largest room as a *Library*."[4] But, curiously enough, there does not exist sufficient, clear evidence of his close perusal of Spenser's works which were extremely popular in his age. The following extract from J.A. Symonds's book on him amply spotlights his insatiable thirst for knowledge and unparalleled habit of reading books even as student:

> In the acquisition of knowledge he was then as ever unrelaxing. "No student ever read more assiduously. He was to be found, book in hand, all hours; reading in season and out of season; at table, in bed, and especially during a walk; not only in the quiet country, and in retired paths; not only at Oxford, in the public walks, and High Street, but in the most crowded thoroughfares of London. Nor was he less absorbed by the volume that was open before him, in Cheapside, in Cranbourne Alley, or in Bond Street, than in a lonely lane, or a secluded library. Sometimes a vulgar fellow would attempt to insult or annoy the eccentric student in passing. Shelley always avoided the malignant interruption by stepping aside with his vast and quiet agility." And again:– "I never beheld eyes that devoured the pages more voraciously than his; I am convinced that two-thirds of the period of day and night were often employed in reading. It is no exaggeration to affirm that out of the twenty-four hours, he frequently read sixteen. At Oxford, his diligence in this respect was exemplary, but it greatly increased afterwards, and I sometimes thought that he carried it to a pernicious excess: I am sure, at least, that I was unable to keep pace with him."[5]

When Shelley's dead body was found near Via Reggio on 18 July 1822, it had in the jacket the volume of Sophocles in one pocket and a volume of Keats's poems in the other. Such was his passion for reading books. But neither Edward Dowden's monumental biographical work, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley,* nor the writings of Shelley himself point to his perusal of Spenser's poetry thoroughly, though he certainly refers to Spenser and his writings in a few of his letters just casually without making any worth citing comment.[6] And this leads us to suspect that he knowingly hides his intimacy with, and indebtedness to, his influential predecessor's writings.

Secondly, as has already been cursorily remarked that almost all great poets since the publication of *The Faerie Queene* in 1590

have bestowed upon Spenser encomium, but Shelley does not do so, and naturally it upsets a careful reader/ scholar of Shelley. Spenser's contemporaries openly accepted the overwhelming charm and greatness of his poetical works. Writers like Drayton and Lodge paid glowing tributes to the master and proclaimed him "learned, revered and excellent." Even Nashe, who would not easily appreciate any literary artist, called him 'heavenly Spenser'. He was held in high esteem even by the peerless Shakespeare who, while declaring him the true representative of poetry, wrote the following lines in praise of him:

> Spenser to me, whose deep conceit is such
> As, passing all conceit, needs no defence.
> Thou lov'st to hear the sweet melodious sound
> That Phoebus' lute, the queen of music, makes;
> And I in deep delight am chiefly drown'd
> Whenas himself to singing he betakes.[7]

True, the Elizabethan poets regarded Spenser as their leader whose hearse, to quote William Camden, was carried to Westminster Abbey by them and "mournfull Verses and Poems thrown into his Tombe."[8] The words, "The Prince of Poets in His Time," were very appropriately chosen for his epitaph. For centuries his fame did not diminish at all. In the succeeding century, Cowley confessed that he became a poet by reading him. Then, Milton, whom Dryden considered as "the poetical son of Spenser," wrote: " Our sage and serious poet Spenser, whom I dare be known to think a better *teacher* than Scotus or Aquinas."[9] Dryden remarked that Virgil in Latin and Spenser in English were his masters. Alexander Pope, the greatest poet of 'the age of prose and reason', observed that *The Faerie Queene* delighted him all through his life right from the age of twelve onwards. The transitional poets equally felt the charm of Spenser's poetry, and thus he was the favourite poet of Thomas Gray who, it is said, would invariably read his poetry before composing anything poetical. The poets of the Romantic period were thrilled by the unabated magic of Spenser's creative writings. The leader of these poets, William Wordsworth, was bewitched by the sweetness, purity and nobleness of Spenser the poet:

.... And that gentle Bard,
Chosen by the Muses for their Page of State —
Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven
With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace,
I called him Brother, Englishman, and Friend![10]

While S.T. Coleridge was enamoured of Spenser's "maidenly purity of feeling" and "the indescribable sweetness and fluent projection of his verse,"[11] Sir Walter Scott desired to read him for ever. Keats felt that every fibre of his being was touched and influenced by Spenser, and hence he paid a glowing tribute to him:

A silver trumpet Spenser blows,
And, as its martial notes to silence flee,
From a virgin chorus flows
A hymn in praise of spotless Chastity.
'Tis still! Wild warblings from the Aeolian lyre
Enchantment softly breathe, and tremblingly expire.[12]

Apparently, it can not be gainsaid that Spenser has been the most puissant influence on English poetry upto the Victorian age. And as it is a fact, it is impossible to believe that Shelley had not read him closely and that his art and ideas were not shaped by Spenser, despite the truth that the former has not admitted all this adequately in clear terms.

Notwithstanding his conscious and unconscious efforts to conceal his indebtedness to Spenser, even a brief analysis of Shelley's writings is enough to prove the latter's impact on him. Finished in 1813, *Queen Mab,* called a philosophical poem by the poet himself, is his first important, ambitious work which shows signs of the impact of Spenser on him, although it was mainly written under the influence of French philosophers and Godwin and its poetic form was borrowed from Robert Southey's *Thalaba*. No doubt, it gives spontaneous and effective expression to some of the leading ideas of the poet — viz. his rejection of orthodox Christianity, contempt of kings and tyrants, unflinching trust in religious tolerance and full faith in the perfectibility of man —, a close perusal of the poem brings to light his fascination for Spenser and his allegorical epic, *The Faerie Queene*. The simple plot of the poem portrays Lanthe lying asleep and his disembodied soul being

taken to superterrestrial spheres by Queen Mab, the queen of the fairies. Though in ideas and ideals, the poem is typically Shelleyian, the fairy queen Mab of the poem instantly recalls to our mind the fairy queen of Spenser's *magnum opus.*

Alastor; or The Spirit of Solitude, composed at the age of twenty-three during a summer spent in Windsor Forest along with Mary Godwin and published in 1816, is generally considered Shelley's first masterpiece, which unmistakably reveals Spenserian touches. No doubt, the title of this long poem is a Greek word meaning "the avenging genius" and it is written in admirable blank verse and is Wordsworthian in the poet's untiring search for Nature's essence, but Shelley's fondness for Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* is obvious in that the poem presents a solitary poet-wanderer in search of truth, very much like Spenser's Red Cross Knight. Furthermore, the protagonist of the poem experiences in Cashmire a wonderful vision of a beautiful veiled maiden, who resembles Spenser's Una in *The Faerie Queene,* and is the incarnation of knowledge, truth and virtue in addition to ideal beauty. Of the vision of this veiled maid, Shelley writes:

.... He dreamed a veiled maid
Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought; its music long,
Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
His inmost sense suspended in its web
Of many-coloured woof and shifting hues.
Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme ....[13]

These lines of Shelley at once bring to our mind Spenser's graphic portrayal of Una — an embodiment of great virtues like truth, purity, beauty and innocence —, a part of which is cited below to demonstrate that the nineteenth century poet's mind had indelible impressions of Spenser's poetry:

A lovely Ladie rode him faire beside,
.....
.....
Under a vele, that wimpled was full low;
And over all a blacke stole she did throw,
As one that inly mournd, so was she sad,

.....

And by her in a line a milk white lambe she led.

So pure and innocent, as that same lambe,
She was in life and every vertuous lore,[14]

The next year, i.e. 1817, which was very difficult and painful to him because of the suicide committed by his wife Harriet, Shelley brought out *The Revolt of Islam,* the greatest of the three memorable poems he composed that year. Though ideologically it is a sequel to *Queen Mab* and bears no resemblance to Spenser's works thematically because it deals with the ideal of freedom, regarless of the failure of the French Revolution which disappointed and disillusioned most of the poets of his generation, it explicitly reveals the impact of Spenser on the young poet. Shelley's Preface to *The Revolt of Islam,* his second significant poem, the first being *Alastor,* has several direct and indirect references to Spenser. The statement that the poem is a story of human passion in its universal form with "moving and romantic adventures" with a view to making the reader see "the beauty of true virtue"[15] reminds us of Spenser's intentions in *The Faerie Queene.* Then, after a few paragraphs, while speaking of influences on a writer, he makes a mention of Spenser. And thereafter he admits that he owes a lot to Spenser in that he has found the Spenserian stanza as the most suitable form to express and embody his poetical ideas. He writes:

> I have adopted the stanza of Spenser (a measure inexpressibly beautiful), not because I consider it a finer model of poetical harmony than the blank verse of Shakespeare and Milton, but because in the latter there is no shelter for mediocrity; you must either succeed or fail. This perhaps an aspiring spirit should desire. But I was enticed also by the brilliancy and magnificence of sound which a mind that has been nourished upon musical thoughts can produce by a just and harmonious arrangement of the pauses of this measure. Yet there will be found some instances where I have completely failed in this attempt; and one, which I here request the reader to consider as an erratum, where there is left, most inadvertently, an alexandrine in the middle of a stanza.[16]

When one reads *The Revolt of Islam,* one easily discerns the impact of Spenser on Shelley in the very first stanza of the Dedication of the poem to Mary. The third line of the extract, cited below, is of

special importance in this context as it poetically and obliquely refers to the characters of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene:*

> So now my summer task is ended, Mary,
> And I return to thee, mine own heart's home;
> As to his Queen some Victor Knight of Faery....[17]

True, Shelley seems to have been obsessed with Spenser and his *The Faerie Queene* as far as the contents, form, imagery and versification of *The Revolt of Islam* are concerned, though, of course, it does not mean that he is a mere imitator of Spenser or of any other poet because he displays a lot of originality in this poem.

Of the poetic dramas written by Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound* is his masterpiece which evinces Spenser's influence on the author in several ways. Like Spenser's *The Faerie Queene,* it is a brilliant 'poetic pageant'. Also, it shows Shelley's unflinching faith, like Spenser's, in cardinal human virtues such as Gentleness, Goodness, Wisdom, Endurance and Love. Again, like the characters in *The Faerie Queene,* most of the characters in this poetic play are invested with varied allegorical interpretations and significance. For instance, it is usually believed that Prometheus stands for Humanity, Jupiter for the Principle of Evil, Demogorgon for the Primal Power of the world, and Asia for Nature and its manifestations, particularly Love and Beauty. Then, Hercules represents Strength, Panthea Faith, Thetis false ideals, Ione Hope, Furies the causes of suffering in the world, and Spirits, who comfort Prometheus, Goodness. In this context, the following extract from Mrs. Shelley's Note on the play is worth quoting:

> He (Shelley) followed certain classical authorities in figuring Saturn as the good principle, Jupiter the usurping evil one, and Prometheus as the regenerator, who, unable to bring mankind back to primitive innocence, used knowledge as a weapon to defeat evil, by leading mankind, beyond the state wherein they are sinless through ignorance, to that in which they are virtuous through wisdom....
>
> .... Prometheus defies the power of his enemy, and endures centuries of torture; till the hour arrives when Jove, blind to the real event, but darkly guessing that some great good to himself will flow, espouses Thetis. At the moment, the Primal Power of the world drives him from his usurped throne, and Strength, in the person of Hercules, liberates Humanity, typified in Prometheus, from the tortures generated by evil done or suffered. Asia, one

> of the Oceanides, is the wife of Prometheus — she was, according to other mythological interpretations, the same as Venus and Nature. When the benefactor of mankind is liberated, Nature resumes the beauty of her prime, and is united to her husband, the emblem of the human race, in perfect and happy union.... Maternal Earth, the mighty parent, is superseded by the Spirit of the Earth, the guide of our planet through the realms of sky; while his fair and weaker companion and attendant, the Spirit of the Moon, receives bliss from the annihilation of Evil in the superior sphere.[18]

Shelley's long critical essay titled *A Defence of Poetry* also contains some observations which go to prove that he was influenced by Spenser without any doubt. For instance, while speaking of the poets who are endowed with poetical faculty, though great yet less intense, he mentions Spenser along with Euripides, Lucan and Tasso. He points out that these poets "have frequently affected a moral aim, and the effect of their poetry is diminished in exact proportion to the degree in which they compel us to advert to this purpose."[19] He refers to Spenser a number of times in this critical piece.

In his theory of poetry as propounded in the prefaces he has written for most of his longer poems, in his letters in which he comments on literature and, most of all, in the brilliant but unfortunately unfinished work, *A Defence of Poetry,* several of Shelley's significant cogitations on poetry seem to be an echo of Spenser's ideas on the subject expressed particularly in long poems like *The Ruins of Time* and *The Tears of the Muses.* Shelley defines poetry as "'the expression of the imagination.'"[20] A poet comprehends the true, the beautiful and the good, and he invariably "participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one."[21] Obviously, a poem, according to Shelley, is "the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth"[22]; it embodies wisdom mingled with pleasure; and it unveils the hidden beauty of the world and reveals the image of the divinity in man whose very existence is love inalienable from moral good. Naturally, poetry, in Shelley's view, is "the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds,"[23] and it immortalizes "all that is best and most beautiful in the world."[24] Inevitably, poetry is immortal and poets are prophets and "the unacknowledged legislators of the world."[25] These observations of

Shelley, embodying his lofty concept of poetry, are exquisitely summed up in the extract from Spenser's poem, *The Ruins of Time*.

'For deeds do die, however nobly done,
And thoughts of men do as themselves decay:
But wise words taught in numbers for to run,
Recorded by the Muses, live for aye;
Ne may with storming showers be wash'd away,
Ne bitter-breathing winds with harmful blast,
Nor age, nor envy, shall them ever wast.

.....

.....

Then whose will with virtuous deeds assay
To mount to heaven, on Pegasus must ride,
And with sweet poets' verse be glorified.[26]

The above discussion sufficiently establishes the truth that Shelley all through his poetic career wrote under the influence of Spenser, though he did not properly concede it and concealed it deliberately as much as he could, and hence I stop illustrating further from his works lest this article should suffer from tedious repetition and overdilation of facts. However, in the end, it is to be reiterated that Shelley learnt a lot from Spenser: he wrote allegorical poems like Spenser; he bequethed us a remarkable pastoral poem after the manner of Spenser's pastorals; he composed a memorable pastoral elegy entitled *Adonais* like Spenser's *Astrophel*; he wrote hymns in the style of Spenser's *Fowre Hymnes*; he was as sensuous as Spenser; he accorded poetry a very high place like Spenser; his Platonism bore a close resemblance to that of Spenser; and he used the Spenserian stanza in his three masterpieces of varied nature — *The Revolt of Islam, Adonais*, and "Stanzas Written in Dejection Near Naples" —, while no other poet, not even Keats who unequivocally proclaimed Spenser as his master, used this stanza as frequently as Shelley did. Evidently, Shelley was affected by the anxiety of Spenser's influence on him.

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RUSKIN ON HOMER AND SHAKESPEARE

Chetna Sehrawat

In his 'Sesame and Lilies' (1865), Ruskin regards great poets as "the highest representatives of men."[1] Ordinary men, according to Ruskin, being absorbed in the cares of life, do not think earnestly about the important and deeper aspects of life. Thus, a great poet is born to teach and enlighten us about our future destiny by revealing the mysteries of life plainly in a deeply felt language. He puts Dante and Milton in this category. However, he considers Homer and Shakespeare greater than Dante and Milton, for all our thoughts have been greatly moulded by them. All Greek gentlemen were educated under Homer, all Roman gentlemen by Greek literature, and Italian, French and English gentlemen by Roman literature. In the domain of English thought, we all are indebted to Shakespeare. Thus to Ruskin's mind, Homer and Shakespeare have been centres of mortal intelligence and masters of human nature.

Ruskin focuses on the Homeric story of Achilles who had tenderness of affection and intense desire for justice. And yet he became the most unjust and the most cruel of men, for he was immersed in love and friendship. He sacrificed his armies for the sake of his mistress, and everything for the sake of his friend. And this man died at last at the hand of the basest of his adversaries. Here we get a peep into the mystery of life.

Shakespeare differs from Homer only in that he recognizes no gods who will bestow deliverance on us. He has shown that the most righteous and the strongest come to a tragic end "by petty chance – by momentary folly — by broken message — by fool's tyranny — or traitor's snare."[2] Petty chance operates in the change of foils in *Hamlet*, momentary folly drives King Lear to a tragic end, tne broken message refers to *Romeo and Juliet*, the fool's tyranny to Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*, and Othello is caught in a "traitor's snare". Ruskin points out that Shakespeare makes us conscious of a moral law that "the gods are just, and of our pleasant vices make instruments to scourge us."[3] Ruskin asks us if this is not a mystery of life and if it does not make us wiser.

In *Modern Painter*, Vol.V, Ch.II Ruskin examines the Greek

classical poetry, which asserts victory over fate, sin and death through heroism. Fate can assume three forms: first, blindness or ignorance inducing acts leading to destruction; secondly, the sin of one person visiting upon another person; and thirdly, a benevolent will being repressed by brutal or tyrannous strength. Thus, while the Greek tragedians connect sorrow with sin, Fate in Shakespeare, though a form of blindness, issues in indiscretion or haste. It is fatal but hardly criminal. Shakespeare's victims are often innocent, but are swept away by a current of a "strong encompassing calamity."[4] Ophelia, Cordelia, Arthur, and Queen Katherine are a few examples. But in the case of the Greeks the victim is, in some way, entangled with crime, and is finally destroyed by it.

In the Greek tragedies, the enemy is sinfulness that is met with a higher moral resolve and self-sacrifice. Thus a Greek tragedy closes with the far-off sounds of a divine triumph and a glory as of resurrection, whereas at the close of Shakespeare's tragedy, "nothing remains but dead march and clothes of burial."[5] For Homer, ungoverned passions, especially anger and rash impulsiveness are the enemies of mankind and can be conquered. Achilles' anger, misdirected by pride but rightly directed by friendship, is the subject of *Iliad*. The subject of *Odyssey* is the anger of Ulysses, misdirected first into idle and irregular hostilities but at last directed to the execution of sternest justice. The central idea of these two great epics is related to the evil of unbridled passions, pride, sensuality and indolence. The pride of Atrides, the passion of Paris, the sluggishness of Elpenor, the impatience of sailors in untying the winds, and other faults or follies of domestic disorderliness are shown in contrast with the conditions of patient affection and household peace.

Other enemies of mankind, Homer believes, are the mysterious wild powers of Nature. Therefore all the struggles of Ulysses represent the fight of man not only with his own passions, but also with the merciless and mysterious powers of Nature. Ruskin makes it clear that in dealing with such subjects the Greeks do not shrink from horror. They strive to sound the secret of sorrow to the utmost depth and to the minutest physical detail. Ruskin says:

"Whether there be consolation for them or not, neither apathy nor blindness shall be their saviour; if for them, thus knowing the facts of the grief of earth, any hope, relief, or triumph may hereafter seem possible — well; but if not, still hopeless, reliefless, the eternal sorrow shall be met face to face."[6] Although Hector is righteous, merciful and brave, yet he has to look upon his dearest brother in miserable death. He himself dies in hopeless sobs because of a wound in the throat inflicted by the Grecian spear. This is a mystery.

Therefore the best course is to be men while we live — men not only strong and fearless, but striving to be perfect. All the powers of Fate may oppress us, or destroy us. But while we live "we will hold fast our integrity; no weak tears shall blind us, no untimely tremors abate our strength of arm nor softness of limb. The gods have given us at least this glorious body, and this righteous conscience; these will we keep bright and pure to the end so may we fall to misery, but not to baseness; so may we sink to sleep, but not to shame."[7] This was the real conquest for the Greek. When so defied, the dark shadows shrank back, the mysterious horror turned into majestic sorrow and Death was swallowed up in victory. The blood which they shed upon the battlefield bloomed into hyacinth flowers. Their gods descended to give them a helping hand. All Nature around them became divine. Everything melted into grace and love. This was the Greek faith.[8]

Like Dryden, Ruskin too loved Shakespeare. In para 34 of *Munera Pulveris* he describes the significance of Shakespeare's names, which Ruskin believes are a mixture of various traditions and languages. For example, Desdemona means "miserable fortune", Othello means "the careful", Ophelia means "serviceableness", Hermione means "pillar-like", Titania means "the queen", Benedict and Beatrice mean "blessed and blessing", and so on. Curiously, Mathew Arnold calls it "a piece of extravagance" and "the note of provinciality."[9] To this charge against Ruskin Northrop Frye's views are quite pertinent: "Now whether Ruskin is right or wrong, he is attempting genuine criticism. He is trying to interpret Shakespeare in terms of a conceptual framework which belongs to the critic alone.... Here it is Arnold who is the provincial."[10] Northrop Frye considers

Ruskin "a genuine critic and Arnold the public critic or the spokesman of the imposed critical attitude."[11]

In *Modern Painters*, Vol. IV Ruskin compares Shakespeare to the sun which shines on all without any bias. He can contemplate with equal judgment the life of the court, cloister, and tavern; and can sympathise equally with all creatures by completely effacing his own personality and even his conscience. He can enter into the soul of such contemptible creatures as Falstaff or Shylock without any moral compunctions. Keats tried to imbibe this "Negative Capability." This is what Dryden meant when he said that Shakespeare "had the largest and most comprehensive soul."[12]

Shakespeare painted straight from life, but he conceived the spirit of all ages. He took things as he found them "animating them with pure human nature, of any time and all time ... and wheresoever, the temporary feeling was in any way contrary to that of his own day, errs frankly, and paints from his own time."[13] Ruskin quotes the following lines from *Romeo and Juliet* to show that he painted only what he saw:

> As rich shall Romeo by his lady lie.
> Poor sacrifices of our enmity.[14]

Thus he lived in the sixteenth century, not in the thirteenth century, despite "all the broad and eternal humanity of his imagination."[15]

Shakespeare seems to consider the pine tree to be noble because he had seen clumps of pine rising on little sandstone mounds in Warwickshire, and at the places of execution of Piers Gaveston, above the lowland woods. He touches on this fondly in the following lines from *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest*:

> As rough,
> Their royal blood enchafed, as the rud'st wind,
> That by his top doth take the mountain pine,
> And make him stoop to the vale.[16]

> The strong-based promontory
> Have I made shake, and by my spurs plucked up
> The pine and cedar.[17]

Shakespeare seems to have choosen the pine for its strength and animal-like grasp for Ariel's prison in *The Tempest*. In *Richard II*,

Shakespeare writes:

> But when, from under this terrestrial ball,
> He fires the proud tops of the eastern pines.'[18]

Hill scenery has made such an impression on Shakespeare's mind just because he had seen it in is youth.

Ruskin holds that Shakespeare is wonderful at revealing the difference in nature between one human being and another; one person being from the birth pure and affectionate, another base and cruel. With this attitude to humanity, Shakespeare's sorrowful view of Fate closely resembles that of the ancients. He differs from Dante in that he always dwells on the last cause. Dante invariably points to the moment of the soul's choice which fixed its fate. But Shakespeare always displays the working of powerful Fate, and dwells with infinite bitterness on the power of the wicked, and the magnitude of the result produced by seemingly little things. The loss of a handkerchief leads to a grim tragedy in *Othello*, and "Hamlet gets hold of the wrong foil, and the rest is silence."[19] Edmund's messenger "is a moment too late at the prison, and the feather will not move at Cordelia's lips."[20] Salisbury is slightly late at the tower and Arthur is dead. Thus Shakespeare displays that General and Iago can, in this world, manage to have their own ways, though they come to a bad end.

There is a striking difference between the critical approach of Coleridge and that of Ruskin. The former refers to Shakespeare's genius and imagination. But Ruskin's approach is, in a sense, biographical, for he traces everything back to the writer's environmental growth, though he views it strictly in terms of the influence of Nature. Secondly, Coleridge did not study gains in terms of his age as Ruskin does. However, in one sense, both have a common approach as they consider Shakespeare's powers innate, and attribute his limitations to his age.

For the Greeks, Fate was the chief adversary. Man was shown as a weak creature and his fate was a foregone conclusion. Shakespeare imparted depth to tragedy. His tragedy involves exceptional calamity leading to the death of a man of high social status. But the calamities are not sent; they proceed from the actions

of the hero. Shakespeare's supernatural is always placed in the closest relation with character and situation; and its influence is not of a compulsive kind. It does not; in any way, take away the responsibility of the hero. In addition to the external conflict, Shakespeare shows the hero torn by internal conflict. Macbeth is torn between ambition and duty, Antony between love and duty, Othello between love and jealousy, and Hamlet between duty and indecision. Unable to bear the strain, the hero finally gives way and perishes.

In Shakespeare's tragedies Ruskin does not find the same role of fatalism as in the Greek tragedies. All actions issue from the hero's character. But human life cannot be reduced to a formula; it is an unfathomable mystery. The law of "Karma", the mystic working of the law of causation is relentless. But how is it that Othello's companion happens to be such a brave and vile man as Iago? Lear has such daughters, and Cordelia such sisters? How is it that man's virtue becomes his fatal weakness in the circumstances in which he is placed by Destiny? Macbeth in Hamlet's place would kill Claudius without bothering about his conscience; and Hamlet in Macbeth's place would never kill Duncan whatever the witches might prophesy. Othello is jealous; but which lover is not? But every lover does not have an Iago for his companion.

In his criticism of Homer and Shakespeare, Ruskin is dominated by God. Wherever he finds the presence of God, he praises that writer and vice versa. He sees greatness in Shakespeare's art, but he finds Homer more consoling because of God's presence there. In his demands of assurance and consolation from art Ruskin is a typical Victorian. We remember how Mill, Carlyle and Arnold found 'consoling power' in Wordsworth's poetry. Plagued by doubt, or rattled by the rhetoric or the agnostics, the conservative Victorians, the crusaders of the Oxford Movement, sought healing power in literature. Whoever offered the healing touch was called a great writer by them.

As critic, Ruskin is only different from Arnold in that, unlike the latter, he is not interested in the 'general ideas' of bite — of science and new learning; he is happy with his faith in God and would look

at arts including Nature as God's creation and His glorification. No wonder Ruskin became an inspiration for the younger generation who advocated 'art for art's sake' theory or launched the Pre-Raphaelite Movement. Not that Ruskin was not interested in ideas, he wrote *Unto this Last* and challenged the Utilitarian economics which was so dominant in his time. In fact, he became a source of inspiration for the socialists of next generation like Williams Morris and Bernard Shaw. But here again the force for his counter argument he relied upon was Christian religion. The very title *Unto this Last* was derived from a Biblical story. Against Agnosticism as well as Utilitarianism he held his faith in religion. Thus his appreciation, or depreciation of arts, too, is determined by his religious orientation.

NOTES

[1]John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies in Literary Criticism of John Ruskin*, ed. Harold Bloom (London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1972), p.182.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, 5 Vols, in *Literary Criticism of John Ruskin*, ed. Harold Bloom, p.145.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid., p.147.

[7]Ibid., p.148.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Quoted by Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), p.9.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Ibid.

[12]John Dryden, "An Essay on Dramatic Poesy," *Eighteenth Century Poetry and Prose*, eds. Louis I Bredvold, Alan D. McKillop and Louis Whitney, 3rd ed. (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1973), p.126.

[13]Bloom, p.135.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid., p.133.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid., p.134.

[20]Ibid.

W.H. AUDEN: IN PURSUIT OF POETIC IDEAL

S. Padmini

Much of Auden's poetry written towards the end of the nineteen thirties contains two principal themes. One is man's quest for salvation through the ages, and it is this quest that clarifies and gives urgency to the need for a living faith that would both assimilate and supplant the earlier, primitive faiths and answer the deepest urges of modern consciousness. The other motif is directly related to the poet's own immediate task, to the problems concerning poetry or art that is a product of visionary imagination and that aspires, at the same time, to reality. Auden introduces these motifs thus:

> With all his engines round him and the summer flowers,
> Little upon his little earth, man contemplates
> The universe of which he is both judge and victim;
> A rarity in an uncommon corner, gazes
> On the great trackways where his tribe and truth are nothing.
>
> (*English Auden* 62-63)

The visionary realm and the world of actual human experience are, in a sense, antithetical, and yet the ultimate ideal of poetry is to reconcile and encompass the two.

The tone of Auden's contemporaries — Rex Warner, C. Day Lewis, Stephen Spender, Louis MacNeice, and Dylan Thomas — is apparently calm and reflective, but this calm is not expressive of serenity achieved through a resolution of doubts and complexities. The concept of the evolutionary march of consciousness resulting in the emergence of qualitatively higher species seems no longer tenable to Auden, and his knowledge of man's inescapable tragic destiny necessitates a new order and also an appraisal of the older forms. The account of Auden as the quester of truth bears the stresses of the purgatorial climb, and his problem is to realize how genuine poetry is to be differentiated from spurious kind. The beauty of form itself, whether natural or artistic, seems no more valid than a delightful illusion. Auden's stark vision as revealed in *Journey to a War, Another Time, New Year Letter,* and *For the Time Being* is a repudiation of not merely romantic idealizations, but of all imaginative constructions, even of goodness.

Auden's *Another Time* (1940) is set on a theme that is found in *Journey to a War,* particularly in the sonnet sequence. Its unity is effected by placing man in relation to history of the time and partly by the theme of "eclectic humanism" woven around this book (Spears 133). Auden's contemporaries, caught in predicament of history and in search of identity as well as time to identify themselves with, oscillate forward and backward, whereas Auden accepts the existential present rather than escapes into the past or future. His title poem in *Another Time* sets the tone:

> Bowing, for instance, with such old-world grace
> To a proper flag in a proper place,
> Muttering like ancients as they stump upstairs
> Of Mine and His or Ours and Theirs. (62)

During a stay in Brussels in the winter of 1938, Auden visited the Museum of fine arts. To the paintings of Brueghel, the famous painter of Flanders, Auden refers again and again in his poem "Musee Des Beaux Arts," and each reference carries sensations of his perfect communion with the painter. His realization of the futility of the self-defeating liberal humanism led him to the quest of some more satisfying principle than what psychology and politics had provided. Auden's meeting with Charles Williams, an Anglican layman, revived the religious spirit lying dormant for a long time. Then, Kierkegaard's idea of the primacy of subjectivity and his emphasis on the necessity of faith must have relieved Auden of his tormenting conflict aroused by his awareness of the inherent deficiency of liberal humanism. This provided a new perspective to Auden's concept of freedom and necessity as revealed in *Another Time* :

> It was true
> For now I have the answer from the face
> That never will go back into a book
> But ask for all my life, and is the Place
> Where all I touch is moved to an embrace,
> And there is no such thing as a vain look. (29)

This religious zeal Auden brings to bear upon his reading of the poems of his secular contemporaries.

The poem "Musee Des Beaux Arts," exhibiting the art of self-

annihilation, explains the continual enlargement of the meaning of the phrase impersonality and the shifts of emphasis. A self-effacing artist is amoral, his interest lies in variety and contrast, in unique particularities, and not in the ethical justification of motivations and actions. In the description of the first two paintings, "The Numbering at Bethlehem" and "The Massacre of Innocent," there may be an echo of Auden's reading of the Old Testament of *The Bible,* but none of the words has any theological significance; they just indicate the depth of Auden's consuming experience. The varying responses of his contemporaries may be summarized and classified as the reality of moral evil seen in the third painting, "Icarus." The poem reveals another aspect of Auden's inquiring mode: his historic sense is no more an abstraction, but his commitment to a poetic ideal.

At the juvenile phase of his poetic career, Auden sees life as a mystery, and he does not seek to impose any order on the chaos of experience. What strikes him in de la Mare's poetry is not his grappling with moral evil, but the depth and sublimity of his misery:

> Little enough stays musing upon,
> The passing of one of the masters of things,
> Only a bird looks peak-faced on,
> Looks and sings. (*New Verse* 5)

Thomas Hardy and de la Mare are seen as two contrasting poets, and here Auden's emphasis is on the pluralism of de la Mare's world. Auden, referring directly or obliquely to these aspects of de la Mare's genius, identifies himself with de la Mare. Auden's response is increasingly directed to de la Mare's coping with human misery and the mystery accompanying it. The adolescent poems of Auden included in *Lions and Shadows* show a similar sensitive response to de la Mare's poetry of pain, "mist and cloud," and "night's rain" (187).To Auden, de la Mare is as real and as primordial as creation itself.

Auden of the late nineteen thirties perceives in Brueghel's painting, "The Numbering at Bethlehem," what Auden of the late nineteen twenties has felt about de la Mare's poems: the spectacle of creation writhing in suffering, of human nature convulsing in agony.

To the young Auden, impersonal poetry is a mystery. It is Eliot who unveils a little the mystery "converting number from vague to certain" (*Poems* 43). Warner could not conceive of any superior being discovering any inadequacy or weakness in Auden's conception of poetry. He says:

> the chill of hope,
> the winter chill of what was hot and hale
> to give itself to the air
> like eagles in a gale
> or climbers on a cliff without a rope,
> took breath away
> and made me listen to the rattling rhythm
> of air in quaking sedge,
> see towers of ice
> behind the dancers on the first of May,
> my reach of hope contracted to a ledge;
> mist marred the main....

Warner's poem exhibits the young Auden as "busy the goldcrest," "a spot of spirit," the romantic friends as "longtailed tit": "the longtail lunging and lingering through the air" (21).

Warner's appraisal of the poet's impersonality has two implications. The genius of a poet has the utmost achievement of human intellect, and his detachment is that of a superior being separated in space from the human scene. This remoteness should be distinguished from empathy. Both the attitudes make of Warner a rather passive personality and do not sufficiently explain the intensity of his vision. Warner says:

> Glad breeding brids
> thrill among leaves and bucket through the sky,
> All mud and mould shudders with life to-day;
> Birth bursts by flooding, bloodless, without pain. (15)

In Auden's Oxford poems, *Poems* (1928) and *Poems* (1930), the reality of suffering becomes so compelling that he sometimes questions the truth of the poetry of his contemporaries. His juvenile reflections on mutability and human misery are of a speculative nature, and it was towards the end of 1927 that Eliot's *The Waste Land* changed his thinking about poetry: "The desert opens here, and if, though we / Have ligatured the ends of a farewell...(*EA* 438).

Eliot's theories of impersonality and his objective correlative are constantly echoed in Auden's *Poems* (1928). The poem "Consider if you will how lovers stand..." throws light on the aesthetic of Auden and his contemporary poets:

> _ others
> Less clinically-minded, will admire
> An evening like a coloured photograph,
> A music stultified across the water. (*EA*)

Warner and others dwell chiefly on the relation between nature and joy, whereas in Auden the focus is shifted to the poetic and artistic traditions created and established by the masters of the past.

The distinctive mark of Auden's genius is its elusiveness and impersonality, its impersonal perception of good and evil. Commenting on the callousness and cruelty of the English readers of the nineteen twenties, Warner contrasts the stature of Auden with that of his friends:

> Nor will my mind permit me to linger in the love,
> the motherkindness of country among ascending trees,
> knowing that love must be liberated by breeding,
> fearing for my fellows, for the murder of man. (11)

What is uppermost in Warner's mind is the question of annihilating the self, more precisely, the ego, for the yawning ego hinders impersonal perception and action and leads to involvement in experience:

> We sometimes raise our heads from the window sill,
> We sometimes venture to the ruinous door;
> in the creaking house we demand light and air;
> for what we need most is an atmosphere
> fit to be breathed, and light by which to see. (18)

This is not the voice of a distant aesthete weaving patterns of beauty. This is the language of a man who knows what sorrow is and who shares the agonies of his fellow-mortals. In a world where neatly arranged patterns seem to crack, Warner looks for a human recourse, for a means of salvation independent of religion, and in empiricism he discovers an ideal mental attitude which, if attained, would enrich his perception of life and at the same time release him from bondage of experience.

Auden's *Poems* (1930) once again shows a greater

understanding of the reality of pain, and for him the experience of suffering is a necessary prelude to a renewal of life and to the perception of beauty. He says:

We know it, we know that love
Needs more than the admiring excitement of union,
More than the abrupt self-confident farewell,
The heel on the finishing blade of grass,
The self-confidence of the falling root,
Needs death, death of the grain, our death,
Death of the old gang; would leave them
In sullen valley where is made no friend,
The old gang to be forgotten in the spring,
The hard bitch and the riding-master.... (66)

The mature Auden reads in Brueghel's painting, "The Massacre of Innocent" what the young Auden has read in Eliot's poetry (*AT*). In Eliot's poetry, then, Auden sees the reality of pain, "the progress of an artist," "a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (Eliot 53). What happens is Auden's surrender to Eliotian impersonal art.

Auden asserts in his defence that the romantic imagination of his contemporary delights in power, in strong excitement, in truth, in good, and in right, whereas the intellectual soul and the classic mind approve only of the true and good:

Hearing of harvests rotting in the valleys,
Seeing at end of street the barren mountains,
Round corners coming suddenly on water,
Knowing them shipwrecked who were launched for islands,
We honour founders of these starving cities;
Whose honour is the image of our sorrow. (*Look, Stranger!* 22)

In the nineteen twenties, de la Mare and Eliot appear to Auden as completely impersonal. In the early nineteen thirties, his concept of impersonality seems to deepen, and in the whole history of mankind only Eliot and Jesus live as images of sorrow. Auden was struck by their integrity, their martyrdom for a great human purpose, their concern for the suffering and erring humanity. And it is this concern for human suffering, gaining in urgency as the political poets scowl at him more menacingly, that gives a new depth of focus to his concept of suffering and martyrdom and deepens his understanding of Eliot.

The thought of impersonality, of doing good to the world, had been recurrent in Warner's poems of the early nineteen thirties. His poems imply an acceptance of the proposition of the Marxian poets that poetry is "the marriage of Cause and Effect, Form and Content." Warner of human intellect "fought, fished, hunted, worked all night ... climbed new mountains" and explored Communism, the potentate mythical city, Eldorado, for "plenty," "profits larger," "a happy year" of "spacious days" (*LS* 32). His dreams of Communism and his poetry of "excellent reasons," with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, proved to be a wild-goose chase, and led him to his "wheeling cries," his writhing despair, and his "love's grave," which Auden correlates objectively with Brueghel's painting, Icarus:

> In Brueghel's Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away
> Quite leisurely from the disaster....(*AT*)

One can see how the poets of the nineteen thirties, with an exception of Auden, moved away from the conceptual orientation of the early nineteen thirties.

The sanctuary of Auden's poetry contains the consecrated relics of older civilizations, of his contemporaries's continual speculations at the pre-lapsarian past, and thus embodies not only the historical time in its entirety but also the furthest stage in the development of consciousness. Auden reveals the architectural truth of his poetry of the nineteen thirties thus:

> Men are not innocent as beasts and never can be
> Man can improve himself but never will be perfect. (*EA*)

In the poems of the nineteen forties, Auden confronts not merely the past of human kind and of the images of truth, but also questioning the validity of his contemporaries's vocation. Past heritage is, thus, sifted and is even modified in the process of assimilation to suit the new needs in a changed context. In an almost devotional tone Auden commends Brueghel to the "family" of Charles Williams, Klerkegaard, Eliot, de la Mare, and "the early messengers" of suffering:

> The friendless and unhated stone
> Lies everywhere about him,
> The Brothered-One, the Not-Alone,
> The brothered and the hated
> Whose family have taught him

To set against the large and dumb,
The timeless and the rooted,
His money and his time. (*AT* 15)

He agrees with Kierkegaard that "all our knowledge comes to this,/ That existence is enough" (*AT* 64).

The poetic ideal that Auden arrives at "Musee Des Beaux Arts" is the fruit of prolonged meditation, and is, in a sense, a continuous extension of the past into the present, an enlargement of the historical sense of impersonal art, enriched by his own experiences of life. Most of Auden's ideas and formulations are taken over from others — especially from de la Mare, Eliot, Charles Williams, Kierkegaard, and Brueghel —, but the ideas developed in the poem "Musee Des Beaux Arts" spring from his deepest convictions and commitments:

About suffering they were never wrong,
The Old Masters: how well they understood
Its human position; how it takes place
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just
walking dully along... (*AT*)

The poem is, therefore, central to an understanding of Auden's entire poetic ideal and achievement.

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PAUL SCOTT'S *STAYING ON:* A POSTCOLONIAL CONSTRUCT

Nikhat Taj

This paper atternpts to analyse *Staying On* as a postcolonial construct,-as at once inheriting and interrogating the discourses of the raj. In it one uncovers "the ideological subtexts of differences, Othering, discrimination and unequal power relations"[1] that existed between the English and the Indians during the colonial rule and that happen to cast their shadow in the postcolonial time frame too. Within this theoretical context, the novel politicizes the representation and identity formation of the coloniser and the colonised in a post-colonial period, i.e. free India. With the raj and its beliefs as points of reference throughout the narrative, the text reads as a specific expose of Eurocentric universalism, which takes for granted both the superiority of what is English and what is not. It reveals the racial/ cultural bias, which helps to posit a political vision of Otherness:

> ... the British who had the whole burden to bear and without whom India would just have fallen apart and nearly did in 1947 when the British handed over and the Indians started killing each other and would have fallen apart if Dickie Mountbatten hadn't been backed up by men like Nehru who was an aristocrat, an old Harrovian and a thorough gentleman and by an army whose senior officers were mostly Sandhurst men and awfully reliable.[2]

The dialectic of the novel thus offers a reading in colonial discourse of the perception of the Other and of the definition of colonialism and the colonised.

In *Staying On*, India becomes an iconic site — a location for postcolonial thesis. In place of a simple model of binary opposition, India is interposed and becomes a centre containing within it strains and dilemma of the colonial connection. A close reading of the text reveals an orientalist exercise being functional in terms of power and identity. The East/Orient/Other construct, according to Edward Said, is an ontological and epistemological distinction developed to help the West dominate and have hegemony over the East.

The presence of this orientalist thesis is not only uncovered in course of the text but is also subverted in context of the Smalleys' (English) experience in independent India. They become subject

to the host (Indian) culture domination over them — the 'subordinate periphery'. Thus we find this ex-colonial couple (Smalley) decentred as purposive and determinative human subject. Lucy Smalley and Tusker get the true picture, the feel of the marginalized Other in the new socio-politico-cultural set-up of free India.

To measure the impact of the *disappearing empire* or *after empire*, the narrative encapsulates the first twenty-five years (1947-1972) of India's independence and offers a postcolonial mode of study/analysis, viz-a-viz the experiences of the ex-colonial couple — the Smalleys — who had opted to stay on in India. It is well to recall that postcolonial literature emerged in its present form out of the experience of colonisation. It looks at colonial strategies (ideologues) of representation of the native and through their predicament examines the complex encoding of fears, fascinations and anxieties. By foregrounding the differences and diversity of the English and the Indians, the ruler and the ruled, the coloniser and the colonised, *Staying On* tends to celebrate hybridity, plurality and cultural polyvalency as the need of contemporary life.

Post-colonial (written with a hyphen) is chronologically inflected and was used first by political scientists to suggest the period after colonisation; it acts as a historical category that suggests a chronology from colonised to decolonised or post-colonial. However, later postcolonial (dehyphenated) developed into a specific reading or analytical practice wherein literary texts could be read for colonial ideologues imbedded in them. Smalleys' predicament in an independent India paradoxically lays open the colonial experience of the raj. The author presents his protagonists imbued with a sense of history so that the past is seldom out of view. In the Smalleys we see a still persisting Englishness, as undermining the source of nostalgia too. This allows Scott to reflect upon its (raj) psycho-social implication in the lives of his characters.

Locked in an 'imperial embrace' of such long standing, the transfer of power has led to a dislocation of status not only for the Indians but for the English as well who have opted to stay on in India. The Smalleys' staying on involves a whole gamut of experience and emotion to cut across the racial and cultural divide

so firmly entrenched by imperialism in their psyche. Lucy Smalley's slight altercation with Mrs. Bhoolabhoy leaves her 'smouldering with outraged dignity':

> She did not look at the two businessmen. An Englishman, of course, would have intervened. Midway through Mrs. Bhoolabhoy's tirade he would have risen quietly, come across and said "...can I be of any assistance?" and she would have indicated just by a look how grateful she was to be reassured of the help and protection of a gentleman whose intervention would have deflated Mrs. Bhoolabhoy, reminded her of her place and sent her silent away to repent, to repent.
>
> But that was at another season and in a distant country. She found it difficult to raise a glass of water without betraying an unsteadiness of hand which she felt the two Indian businessmen were watching out for, as if for further evidence that times for them had changed for the better and that their own old humiliations were being adequately paid for by new (p.223).

The dual notion of 'race and rule' acts as a bind, a lock on the English(s) ability to respond to the Indian situation both under colonialism and after.

The Smalleys may be at the centre of the narrative framework but in context of the new power equation, they are displaced and dislodged components sucked out from the vortex to the periphery of power relation. Destabilised and undermined from their earlier foundational assumptions, concepts and procedures, they posit as the 'Other' construct in the new socio-politico structure of post-colonial India. However, the psyche of a coloniser was and remains an hierarchic one; empowering them to retain their sense of supremacy and dominance against the identity and well being of the native. Thus the experience of colonisation for Lucy Smalley remains racial in context. The novel reveals a subtext of racial bias — an active appropriation of the notion of white superiority and of cultural and racial pride:

> I have not stayed on in India to become, in my old age, either a cook or a masalchi. You have always pointed out the advantages people like us enjoy over those who have gone home and have to make do without servants even when they can afford them. If we had gone home I should have welcomed turning my hand to whatever was necessary. But we did not go home and so I do not welcome turning it (p.211).

Inadvertently relegated to the category of the Other to become

a voice in the margin in this post-colonial situation, the Smalleys best represent what Jasbir Jain has described as the culturally disenfranchised, the 'homeless.'[3] Their trials and tribulations are illustrative of Edward Said's pronouncement that culture has its own power/authority and it belongs to the entire matrix associated with 'home.' The process of decolonisation necessitates rendering the self 'homeless' not once but twice for the colonised. However, in the present instance, this proves true for this ex-colonial couple. Their first homelessness was brought about by their initial dislocation from their own native culture when they came out to India as colonisers. The present novel is replete with instances, which act as forceful reminders of the harshness of what is termed as 'English possession.' For example, Mrs. Bhoolabhoy in her conversation with Mr. Bhoolabhoy comments on the Smalleys thus:

> 'What they can afford or not afford does not interest me. It is no concern of mine, when they ruled the roost our concerns did not enter their heads. It is tit for tat' (p.193).

Or elsewhere Lucy Smalley muses:

> ... but however friendly you were with Indians of your own generation, the generation that had experienced all the passions and prejudices, there was somehow in that relationship a distant and diminishing but not yet dead echo of the sound of the tocsin (p.173).

The fact to be noted here is that in post-colonial India, Smalleys' (read English) equation with the Indians is comparable with that of the Eurasians' with the English during the colonial times. The Eurasians for the English during the raj were synonymous with ignominity. The above illustrations from the text make visible the position of the marginalized Smalleys.

During the British rule, the English in India had a real part to play. They had to 'manufacture a sense of identity' and cultivate 'a sense of community', as Phillip Darby points out in *Fiction of Imperialism*, in order to relate to the colonial set-up:

> ...I feel that India brought out all my very worst qualities. I don't mean this India... but our India, British India, which kept me in my place, bottled up and bottled in, and brain-washed me into believing that nothing was more important than to do everything my place required me to do to be a perfectly complementary image of Tusker and his position (p.168).

Thus the Smalleys, in whose life India had to play a real part, became detached both from 'English life' and English idea of life, once they donned the colonial mantle/identity. However, their second dislocation is later brought about when they decide to stay on in free India — their home of adoption.

> ...I'am happier hanging on in India, not for India as India but because I can't just merely think of it as a place where I drew my pay for the first 25 years of my working life, which is a hell of a long time anyway ...Suddenly the powers that be say, Right, Smalley, we're not wanted here anymore, we've all got to bugger off ... I thought about this a lot at the time and it seemed to me I'd invested in India, not money, which I've never had, not talent (Ha!) which I've only had a limited amount of, nothing India needed or needs or has been one jot the better for, but was all I had to invest in anything Me (pp.231-232).

Motivated with a desire to relocate themselves and establish their identity, these former representatives of the empire find themselves in a state of confusion in this postimperial vacuum. Every event and every encounter becomes a happening which strikes a nostalgic chord and compels Lucy to question both the location and identity. Given the difficulty of making a new start in England and the need to eke out their meagre funds that would go further in India, Tusker had preferred to stay on. One senses the folly of the misplaced pride of this powerless English couple. Tucker's bluff exterior conceals a psyche in confusion. His antics (Holi scene), and profanity directed mostly at Mrs. Bhoolabhoy and Ibrahim represent the overturned world of the raj. He has become a man "roused most to laughter by ribaldry, and by other people's discomfiture"(p.174). What one gets to witness in the novel is "a constant interplay between the sense of historical transition, a socio-cultural relation and an epochal configuration."[4]

The Smalleys plight thus becomes a narrative of changed times:

> ...and the old hierarchy collapsed and the new one, the Indian one, took its place and in this one her position had been marginal and temporary and soon exchanged for that of to be blunt, yes to be blunt, box-wallahs' wives in a world which had increasingly dismayed her because it was one which had brought her into contact with the emerging middle class of wheelers and dealers who with their chicanery, their corrupt practices, their black money, their utter indifference to the state of the nation...(p.97).

A rhetoric of blame is common to the western and colonised people in postcolonial discourse. As a narrative of changed times, the novel reveals the shifting polyvalent contradictory currents of signification within the text and the way it is itself a site on which these ideological struggles (exploration of diversity, hybridity and difference) are acted out. The new situation (postcolonial) interrogates the previous assumptions of imperialist discourse. Fed on notions of exclusion propagated by Burke, Macaulay and Mill, the colonialists came out to India and put into practice the separatist logic and cultural polarization. The white masters (English) created townships of white clubs, white schools and white colonies. Lucy's imaginary conversation with Mr. Turner recreates for us the Pankot of imperial times:

> were coming up what we call East Hill which was always the British side. That's the golf course on our left. There's St. John's spire down to our right.'(p.156)

The town then was divided into sections of residentship — one for the rulers, the other for the natives. In the post-colonial India, Lucy felt the 'disquiet' of worshipping in a place where her pale face seemed to put her at a disadvantage. Lucy's attitude thus is expressive of a need for continuation of colonial attitudes. Despite the fact that India had gained political independence and all outer supports of colonial culture had ended, feelings of superiority, anchorage to the colonial legacy still continued. The British came to India and created the "Us versus Others," writes M.L. Raina, just because England leaving the country does not mean "she takes her constructs with her."[5]

The Other construct in context of European colonialism is rooted in the perception of racial difference. Superiority of white culture is valorised with the support of the Other phenomenon. A systematic devaluation of the colony and the native (Indians) ingrained feelings of subordination. Among the natives an attitude of subjection and inferiority can thus be evidenced. The colonised begin to see the primitiveness of their own culture. Consequently, they begin to put on 'white masks'. Thus begins the natives' (Indians) receptivity to the internalization of external ideas and values. For

Mr. Bhoolabhoy, the Smalleys as members of the old school of British represented the image of respectability and gentility:

> Whenever Tusker and Lucy dined at Smith's and other tables were occupied by Indian guests it was from the Smalley table that a glow of mildness and pleasure emanated. (p.117)

As for Tusker's drinking:

> Tusker drank more than Mr. Bhoolabhoy but then Tusker was a member - the last surviving member in Pankot, with his wife - of the old school of British and needed his liquour. (p.8)

Ibrahim (Smalley's servant) regrets the passing of the days of the raj. His Sahib and Memsahib had been 'pukka log' and he was really proud of them:

> To Ibrahim the difference between being treated by man like Dr. Mitra as if he were merely a machine and an anonymous one at that, and being sworn at by a Sahib like Tusker showed the distinction between a real sahib and the counterfeit. The same kind of distinction between a real memsahib and a self-appointed one was apparent when you compared Lucy-Mem with Mrs. Bhoolabhoy. (p.30)

Ibrahim's reverential attitude towards the raj and sentimental indulgence in the Smalleys is illustrative of the native's feeling of inferiority and subordination.

With the dismantling of the imperial/colonial apparatus, the relation between the self and culture is no longer a cohesive or a spontaneous one for the Smalleys. The barrier of imperial culture creates a state of isolation and alienation; their's is a closed world. The need is to step out of the colonial legacy, to overcome nostalgia and interpret the reality as it confronts them. Post-colonial period requires a positive and constructive attitude to free itself from the historical context. The requisite is for "decolonising the mind, changing the mind-set and moving towards a mind shift."[6]

The postcolonial dialectic in the text finds ample support from Scott's technique of subversion. In fact, Bakhtin's concept of carnivalisation fits very well in the schema of the novel:

> The concept of carnivalisation has very important application to literary texts as well as literary genres. A carnival... makes it possible for anything to happen ....hierarchies turn upside down, opposites like fact and fantasy mingle and mix, seriousness is subverted, popular/ folk libertarian power is proclaimed and points and counter points collide; it is multiverse and not universe.[7]

It is in this context that we see *Staying On* as an attempt to mock or subvert the colonial identity, authority and solemnity. It works against the monologic and hierarchical official culture of colonialism:

> Scott takes the myths of the raj and his own serious fiction, and leavens them both with ribaldry, bawdy and farce...*Staying On* criticizes British Imperialism from an obtuse angle in comparison with the *Quartet's* direct historical commentary.[8]

Staying On presents a perspective whereby states of marginality and perceived Otherness are seen as sources for potential change. It tends to celebrate hybridity and cultural valency where the need is for the individual and group to belong simultaneously to more than one culture of the coloniser and the colonised. The novel as a post-colonial narrative takes into cognition the poetics of colonial as well as post-colonial culture. The attempt is to find the cognate and parallel realities within a seemingly disparate context and to draw on the notion of Otherness, the central premise of colonialism for understanding. The text by a discursive sequence generates the image of the Other (in this instance the Smalleys in post-Independent India) reconstellates the new and old situations to produce new perspectives and realities.

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[6]N. Krishnaswamy, J. Varghese, S. Mishra, *Contemporary Literary Theory* (Delhi: Macmillan, 2005), p. 93.

[7]Ibid., p.13.

[8]Childs, *op. cit.*, p. 133. (Note: *Staying On at the Carnival* which forms the conclusion of this book deals with the carnivalesque aspect of the novel in great detail).

A.K. RAMANUJAN'S 'MYTHOLOGIES' POEMS: AN ANALYSIS

R. Deepta

In the present paper an attempt is made to examine briefly four of Ramanujan's poems based on certain well-known Indian/ Hindu myths. Interestingly three of them are simply called "Mythologies" 1 , 2 and 3. "Mythologies" 1 and 2 are based on two well-known episodes in the *Srimadbhagavatam* connected with two incarnations of Lord Vishnu as Krishna and Narasimha. The third poem is about the Kannada Veerasaiva woman saint Mahadeviakka of the 12th century, an ardent devotee of Siva in the form of Mallikarjuna. And the fourth poem titled "Fear No Fall", which very well could have been called "Mythologies" 4, is based on the life of Arunagiri, a famous Tamil Saint of the 15th-16th century. All the four poems are concerned in different ways with the mystery and paradox of the relation between the mortal and the immortal, the human and the divine.

Before considering these poems a couple of Ramanujan's earlier poems centred on the Hindu theme, namely "The Hindoo: he reads his GITA and is calm at all events", "The Hindoo : the only risk" and "Prayers to Lord Murugan", may be mentioned here just to distinguish the "Mythologies" poems which too are Hindu thematically. The earlier poems stand in contrast to the later ones by the attitude they express towards certain aspects of Hinduism. In fact, their intent is ironical and satirical. Several of his poems reflect this attitude. Yet his sensibility remains basically Indian and Hindu despite his close contact and interaction with other cultures.

Let us now concentrate on Ramanujan's "Mythologies" poems. Allusions to such myths appear every now and then in his poems as a part of poetic strategy in a given context. But it is only in "Mythologies" poems that the poet builds each poem on a particular myth, not to explore its poetic possibility but to discover if it carries a relevance and significance for himself. Therefore in these poems the poet and the personae seem almost to merge into one another. Ramanujan is always aware of the complexities of his nation's

culture, its heritage and of the pastness in his country's past as well as its present. It is worth recalling here what Ramanujan has said in the context of his translation of the religious *Vacanas* of the Kannada Virasaiva saints: "Translation is a choice... a betrayal of what answers to one's needs, one's envies."[1] The need for spiritual help and support in life already felt and expressed obliquely in "Prayers to Lord Murugan" now surfaces firmly in the "Mythologies" poems. In all of them, as professor Niranjan Mohanty has pointed out, the poet incorporates a prayer motif.[2] In "Mythologies" 1 and 2 the poet-speaker himself offers a prayer. The prayer in all these instances is obviously addressed to the divine. Another shared feature of these poems is that they rely not on the poet's accustomed irony but paradox.

"Mythologies 1" recreates in a brief compass the well-known Krishna-Putana episode in *Srimadbhagavatam*. Kamsa, king and maternal uncle of Krishna, sensing danger to his life from his infant nephew when he grows up, sends the she demon Putana disguised as a respectable and beautiful woman to poison the infant under the guise of breast-feeding. Baby Krishna sucks not only the poisonous milk but her life too. Paradoxically having been killed by God, she, redeemed of all her sins, attains salvation. It begins with a dramatic abruptness and the poet-speaker without any ado goes straight to the heart of the matter:

> The breast she offered was full
> of poison and milk.
> Flashing eyes suddenly dull,
> Her voice was silk.[3]

Soon follows the paradoxical consequences of the Demon's death, which is the point of recounting this episode.

> She changed, undone by grace,
> from deadly mother to happy demon,
> found life in death.

The mortal Demon in trying to kill the Immortal child gets killed. Death at the hands of God becomes a blessing for her. She is redeemed of the curse she was labouring under and is purged off all venom and evil in her. The *Bhagvatam* says that Putana thus attains *moksa*.

In this paradoxical situation the poet-speaker finds an occasion to make his prayer with which this short poem ends:

> O Terror with a baby face,
> suck me dry. Drink my venom.
> Renew my breath.

The prayer is addressed to the paradoxical "Terror with a baby face." The speaker prays to be purified and purged off all the 'venom' in him. It is not clear what 'venom' he is referring to. Perhaps he is thinking of all the poison (figuratively speaking) which has been infused into his poetic self, as Prof. Mohanty suggests.[4] The appeal to 'renew' his 'breath' made in the last line of the poem strengthens this view.

"Mythologies 2" is also based on another episode in the *Bhagavatam* connected with Vishnu's fourth and terrible incarnation in which he takes the form of 'Narasimha' (man-lion) and kills the demon king Hiranyakasipu by tearing open his bowels with his lion-claws. Celebration of Vishnu in his several incarnations forms the staple of devotional hymns of the Alvars, the Tamil saint-poets in the Srivaishnava tradition.[5] In the *Bhagavatam*, the mortal demon king Hiranyakasipu, sworn enemy of all the gods, the omnipresent Vishnu in particular, and ambitious of becoming an immortal, obtains a boon from Brahma after a long and rigorous penance to protect himself against all kinds, forms and means of death. In his overweening pride he deludes himself that as a result of this cleverly designed boon he cannot be killed by man-made weapons, thunderbolts, water or fire, or by gods, demons, seers and other creatures; or in heaven, in earth during the day or at night, either from above or below. Outwitting him Vishnu, whose omnipotence and omnipresence he challenges, takes the form of 'man-loin' (Narasimha), bursts out of a wooden pillar in the hall at sunset, and disembowels the arrogant and proud demon with his claws, taking him in his lap on the threshold, making use of all the loopholes in the boon.

In the first ten lines of his poem Ramanujan recreates the myth faithfully, succinctly and tellingly. In Ramanujan's recreation of the encounter between Hiranyakasipu and Vishnu as Narasimha, there

is a significant omission. He leaves out any mention of the demon's son, the boy Prahlada, whose undiluted and unqualified devotion to the omnipresent Vishnu is the occasion for Hiranyakasipu to challenge Vishnu's presence in the wooden pillar. The omission seems to be intentional. Because the poet-speaker's focus is on the demon king's determined doubt and scepticism and his egotistical pride, as the prayer that follows makes it clear. There is another implicit omission in the poem's use of the myth. According to the *Bhagavatam,* Hiranyakasipu's death at the hands of incarnate Vishnu is a blessing in disguise; he is redeemed and saved from the curse of the sages he was labouring under. This fact goes without mention in Ramanujan's poem because it lies outside its scheme, and not strictly necessary for his purpose.

The last eight lines of the poem form a fervent prayer by the poet-speaker addressed to the paradoxical Vishnu as "man, lion, neither and both." In fact Narasimha is a baffling paradox, beyond the understanding and comprehension of a mere rational understanding or a mere sceptical mind. In the prayerful lines first of all the poet-speaker masterfully visualizes the paradox that Narasimha is:

> O midnight sun, eclipse at noon,
> net of loopholes, a house all threshold,
> connoisseur of negatives and assassin
> of certitudes....

The poem closes with a two-fold prayer which naturally rises out of the situation presented in the previous lines:

> ... slay now my faith in doubt.
> End my commerce with bat and night-
> owl. Adjust my single eye, rainbow bubble,
> so I too may see all things double.

First of all, the speaker wants his "faith in doubt" slayed so that his "commerce with bat and night-owl" may end. Implicitly he recollects here the experience of Hiranyakasipu. Secondly, he wants a "double" vision granted to him, that is, he asks for a mature vision, a total vision which would enable him to see the inner and outer side of things. What his "single eye" has been able to see so far is as colourfully deceptive and insubstantial as a 'rainbow". The

movement of this poem of Ramanujan indicates that he is endeavouring to go beyond "lack and self-doubt" underlying many of his earlier poems, and move towards faith.

In "Mythologies 3" (*CP* 228) Ramanujan turns to Mahadeviakka, also known as Akka Mahadevi. She is the Akka of the poem, a well-known Virasaiva woman saint-poet of the 12th century who wrote a number of *vacanas* (religious lyrics) in Kannada. "Mythologies 3" recalls in particular his translation of Mahadevi's *vacanas*, which provide the relevant context for a better understanding of it. She belongs to the select group of people, men and women alike, who are said to be God-intoxicated. Arunagiri of "Fear No Fall" is of this kind. They are all inextricably involved in God.

It is said of Mahadevi that she was initiated into the worship of Siva when she was a girl of ten. She worshipped him all her life in the form of "Malikarjuna". She believed that she was wedded to this "Lord white as jasmine" and "Lord of goddess Mallika" in spirit. However she was obliged to marry the chieftain of the land. But she could not endure her earthly husband or care for her mundane obligations. She set out defying society in quest of her only true Lord, Mallikarjuna. It is said that she merged into Siva when she was still in her twenties. The situation that Ramanujan dramatises in "Mythologies 3" belongs to the early days of Akka's married life, when she had to tolerate an insensible, unthinking husband whose understanding never rose above bodily needs, while she longed for union with God, with Siva.

The tense drama in the chosen situation in the poem arises from the conflict between Akka and her husband on the one hand, and her abandoning him for her Lord on the other. Appropriately the poem begins dramatically with Akka firmly warning her "new groom" not to approach her with desire when she is at the worship of Siva: "Touch me three times, and you'll never see me again." Her words fall on his incredible ears, because he does not and cannot understand the nature of her longing for Siva and her aspiration to attain Him which conflict with her worldly obligations. When her husband, totally disregarding her warning, touches her, true to her word, Akka repulses him as she would a "spider". Her body turns

"deathly cold" at his "mortal touch". She longs for the warm, life-giving and immortal touch of Siva, for his "caress" the like of which cannot be found on earth. True to her word, Akka flees her husband and goes seeking her Lord, throwing away "her modesty." Fortunately she sees him riding Nandi in her own "backyard":

> She saw him then, unborn, form of forms, the Rider
> His white Bull chewing cud in her backyard.

In his poem Ramanujan places side by side Akka and her husband to suggest the difference between them and their love: one unconventional, devotional and spiritual, and the other purely earthly and physical. It is for the reader to draw his inference. The poet keeps himself at a distance, apparently uninvolved in the dramatic situation.

"Fear No Fall", the last poem in Ramanujan's *Collected Poems* (275-277), and most probably written a couple of months before his death, is the most personal of the four "Mythologies". Because in the paradoxical life of the medieval Tamil saint-poet Arunagiri on which the poem is built, he sees in addition to its general spiritual significance, a personal meaning of great moment to himself because of his life-long preoccupation with the ups and downs of making poetry, its hopes, despairs and disappointments.

Arunagiri's life, as far as it is popularly known, conforms to the familiar mythical pattern of a sinner being transformed into a saint after a miraculous experience. All that needs to be known about his life and relevant to the poem's purposes is provided in the poem itself. The poem has two sections. The first recounts the life of Arunagiri, his dissipating and profligate life, his fall from a cliff in an attempt at suicide, his miraculous rescue and transformation into a devout poet. The second presents the poet speaker's discovery of its meaning and relevance for himself. It is rather unusual to find lengthy narration in Ramanujan's poems. However, in "Fever No Fall" he permits himself a long enough narrative section by his standards, but uses it purposefully to recount vividly but without any irrelevant details the drama of Arunagiri's wasteful, vagrant life:

> Arunagiri, rich and spoiled, spent
> his youth and old money ,
> .....

on medieval liquors, honeymead....

.....

and on women.

When all his money is squandered and he is left with "sores" and incurable "dripping diseases," he is thrown out as garbage. "Unhoused" and uncared for he roams. His "despair" becoming "deeper than his wounds," he decides upon suicide. He clambers up to the cliff of a hill and throws himself down to end the sorry business of his life. Then occurs his miraculous escape. He wakes up "in the lap of a very old man," "strangely unsurprised," smooth and whole again in every limb." Paradoxically the wrinkled old man is no other than the youthful Murugan himself. He tells Arunagiri, "Sing now of Murugan." Arunagiri "who didn't have an alphabet/ in his past nor ever a tune in his head"and who "hated temple bells and hypocrisies", now chastened and purified in all humility admits that he cannot because he is "unlettered" and "worthless". Then the rescuing god himself gives Arunagiri "his first line of verse" and vanishes. He turns it

round and round like candy
in his mouth, new lines forming
all around the old one....

His legendary fall from the cliff becomes a fortunate fall. He falls to rise not only to be a better man but to become articulate as a devout poet singing the praise of Murugan. Incidentally, his songs which are known as *Tiruppugal* are said to have been composed in a new intricate complex metre and rhythm. For Arunagiri his fall paradoxically becomes a way of rising. Arunagiri who turns a new leaf after the transforming experience spends the rest of his life

seeking and finding and losing him
again and again in a labyrinth
of winding words, his songs
twinning around trees, ensnaring
passers by, unlocking cages
even for mynahs and parrots.

In the second section of the poem the poet introspects. He recalls a dream of his falling from a great height which seemed short of a nightmare:

I was tottering without a foothold

on a ramshackle pyramid
of all my books piled any which way
on to a horse cart
and me slipping on top of it
.....
moving through a market town
looking for a place
.....
in a panic fear of falling and breaking my neck
in the gutters below.

Just then he heard a reassuring voice "both within and without" which said, " Fall, fall/you'll never fear a fall again,/fall now!" As poet he has to fall necessarily into a labyrinth of winding words, and like Arunagiri, losing and finding and losing his way out of it. One has to fall before he can rise. If falling is inevitable, so is rising.

The four "Mythologies" poems, which form a homogeneous group, manifest all the virtues of Ramanujan's poetry. There is variety in his handling of the traditional Indian/Hindu myths chosen. In seeing a profound personal significance in them for himself Ramanujan implies their relevance to the present day world too. Read together they shed light on the trend of his thinking in the later years of his life. They give room to infer that Ramanujan who was habitually a skeptic and agnostic, given to doubting and questioning every idea or belief, had begun to feel the need to go beyond "lack and self doubt" and strive to reach the certainty of faith.

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[3]A.K. Ramanujan, *Collected Poems* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.79. Abbreviated as *CP*.

[4]Niranjan Mohanty, "The Points of Return: Poetry of A.K. Ramanujan", *Millennium Perspectives on A.K. Ramanujan*, ed. Surya Nath Pandey, p.54.

[5]"Mythologies 2" recalls a short hymn of Nammalvar's on Narasimha which Ramanujan has rendered into English as "The Man-Lion," *Hymns for the Drowning* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p.9.

PRIVILEGES AND PERILS OF PARALLELING ANTIQUITY AND MODERNITY: A STUDY OF SHASHI THAROOR'S *THE GREAT INDIAN NOVEL*

M.K. Naik

To examine modernity in the light of antiquity is a potent literary device, the most celebrated example of which perhaps is James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Extremely useful as the device is in interpreting the present, it carries with it its own dangers as well. *The Great Indian Novel* is perhaps a copybook example of this.

The novel presents slightly more than half of a century of recent Indian history, evoking continuous parallels from the ancient Hindu epic, the *Mahabharata*. Most of those who played a significant role in Indian history from about 1920 to about 1980 are equated with appropriate counterparts from the *Mahabharata* story, and one realises with a shock of surprise how apt are equations in almost all cases.

To begin with, the oldest character in the ancient *Mahabharata* narrative is Ved Vyasa, who is also the narrator. In *The Great Indian Novel,* his name is modernised as 'V.V.' His amanuensis is 'Ganapathi', whose name has a south Indian flavour. His 'big nose' recalls the elephant trunk of the god whose name he bears. The most influential public figure in modern Indian history was obviously Mahatma Gandhi. He recalls the venerable patriarch, Bhishma in the *Mahabharata*. Bhishma's terrible vow of lifelong *brahmacharya* has an apt parallel in Gandhiji's advocacy of celebacy, though he did this in middle age. It was evidently not possible for the novelist to find parallels for Gandhiji's *satyagriha* and Non-coperation movements in the ancient epic. Tharoor's attempt to present these in a comic manner are however less than successful, as will be shown later.

Next in order of seniority is Dronacharya, the preceptor of the Hastinapur princes. He becomes Jayaprakash Drona in Tharoor's novel. His humiliation which recalls the ancient Drona's, however, differs in one respect from that in the original. The ancient Dronacharya is humiliated by King Drupad, the king's place is taken

by the British official, Mr. Heaslop in the novel. The rumour of the putative death of Ashwatthama which kills Dronacharya in the *Mahabharata* is given a new, modern twist in the novel. The Ashwatthama killed in the epic is an elephant; its place is taken by a cockroach in the novel, not inappropriately, one imagines. Again, like Jayaprakash Narayan, Tharoor's Drona rebels against the authoritarian rule of Delhi, though there is no parallel to this in Vyasa. Dronacharya's encounter with Ekalavya in the epic gets a radically different upshot in the novel, but this will be considered later in a study of the major changes and their rationale.

Dhritarashtra clearly recalls Jawaharlal Nehru, especially in the matter of 'Blindness'. The only difference is that Dhritarashtra is physically blind, while Nehru, as many of his critics said, was too much of a visionary, and was often blind to the realities of life. As Tharoor puts it, 'He had the blind man's gift of seeing the world not as it was, but as he wanted it to be.'[1] Tharoor's Pandu appears to be a composite character, an amalgam of Sardar Patel and Subhashchandra Bose. As the party's chief organiser, he believed that 'discipline and organisation were far greater virtues than ideals and doctrines' (p.86). This description fits Vallabhbhai Patel to a T. At the same time, the following description of Pandu recalls Subhashchandra Bose: (He took up) 'wearing curious little roundish glasses that gave him the appearance of a Bengali teacher or a Japanese admiral' (p.42). One recalls that Subhashchandra Bose was expelled from a Calcutta college because he struck a White teacher who openly abused Indians. Compare this with the following description of Pandu in the novel: 'He was expelled from one of the country's best colleges for stiking a teacher, an Englishman, who had called Indians dogs' (p.42). Bose's subsequent career is traced exactly in the same way as it developed in real life in the verse narration on pp.176 to 191. His imprisonment, his escape from it, his journey to Germany and later to Japan, and finally his death in a plane-crash — all these developments underscore the identification of Bose with Pandu.

The children born to Pandu's wives, Kunti and Madri, have been given modern counterparts in a convincing manner. For

instance, Yudhishthir is the son of the youngest Indian judge of the High Court, and Bhima that of Major Vayu of the Palace Guard. Not yet fully satisfied, Pandu now longed for a foster child which would combine the brains of Yudhishthir with the brawn of Bhima. He elected Devendra Yogi for the assignment, and thus was born Arjun. Not to be left behind, Madri, with Pandu's permission, seduced a pair of identical twins, called Ashvin and Ashwin. The two sons born to her were Nakul and Sahadev. Karna has an interesting counterpart in the novel. He is the son of Kunti by one 'Hyperion Helios' (both names recalling the Sun), a foreign visitor at the palace (one recalls that according to the epic, the Sun is the real father of Karna). As for the century of sons Dhritarashtra is supposed to have had, it is patently difficult for the modern mind to accept this kind of a situation. Tharoor solves the difficulty by employing a master-stroke: he gives Dhritarashtra a single child, in place of a hundred, and further makes the child a girl. Does he wish to suggest that this solitary girl combines in herself the ability of a century of sons? And secondly, the sex of the child makes it easy for him to suggest the equation between 'Priya Duryodhani' of the novel and Indira Gandhi ('Indira Priyadarshini', to give her her full name). One also remembers that Indira was the solitary offspring of Jawaharlal Nehru. The bitter enmity between Duryodhan of the epic and his Pandava cousins is transformed in the novel to Priya Duryodhani's running feud with the 'Old Guard' of the party.

Along with these correspondences, the changes made and the inventions introduced by the novelist must be examined in some detail, because while some of them are eminently justified, some others seem to have little artistic justification. First, there is the well-known encounter between Dronacharya and the forester Ekalavya, who regards the great preceptor as his guru, though his lowly social standing has made it impossible for him to be Dronacharya's regular disciple. Later, when in an archery contest Ekalavya shares the first place with Arjun, the Guru comes to know the truth. Now, since according to the social mores of the day, a low-class person could not practise in archery the way a gentleman did, Dronacharya demands a very stiff fee as 'Guru-dakshina' from Ekalavya: he must

surrender to the guru the thumb of his right hand. Ekalavya demurs at having to lose his archery skill in this fashion, but the combined weight of custom and tradition compels him to offer to the guru what he wants. It was said that from that day no forester used his thumb while practising archery.

The Ekalavya of the novel emerges as a representative of the Dalit classes. They have, during this century, come to realise the monstrous injustice done to them over the centuries by the higher castes, and to feel that they owe nothing to those who enjoy the good fortune of being located on the higher rungs of the caste-ladder. Tharoor's Ekalavya therefore tells his guru bluntly that he cannot pay the fee demanded by the preceptor.

There is also a subtle and apt variation introduced into the 'Thumb' business by the novelist. Vyasa's Ekalavya cuts off the thumb of his right hand, thus diminishing forever his skill as an archer. On the other hand, the reason given by Tharoor's Ekalavya for not cutting off of his thumb is, 'without my ... thumb, I won't be able to write again.' The contrast underscores the essential difference between the primary values of the two ages. The mythological tale values physical prowess; its modern version rightly emphasises the value of intellectual attainment.

Another major change concerns Draupadi, wife of the five Pandavas. In the novel, this character is invested with telling symbolism. Her full name is 'Draupadi Mokrasi', Mokrasi being the name of her adoptive father. Her real father is Dhritarashtra, and her mother is Lady Drewpad, the last Vicerine of India. The symbolism is plain: 'D. Mokrasi' is evidently 'Democracy'; it is a gift of England (Lady Drewpad) to India (Dhristarashtra). Dushasan's attempt to strip Draupadi becomes a symbolic representation of Indira Gandhi's efforts to stifle democracy by the imposition of Emergency in 1975.

If these changes impart a symbolic richness to the narrative, there are unfortunately others which fail to do so, for one reason or another. The first concerns Krishna. He plays a major role in the *Mahabharata*. At the beginning of the war, when Arjuna, torn by self-doubt, refuses to fight, it is Krishna, who reasons with him, and

convinces him that it is duty to fight whosoever the foe. Again, almost at every moment of crisis during the war, it is Krishna's wise counsel that makes the Pandavas victorious. But for the ruses suggested by Krishna, the Pandavas would never have been able to vanquish the great Bhishma and Drona, and the mighty Karna. And in the Jayadratha encounter, where Arjuna had taken the terrible vow of self-immolation, unless he is able to kill Jayadratha before sunset, it is Krishna again who intervenes to enable Arjuna to kill Jayadratha in time.

The importance of Krishna's role is also underscored by the tributes paid to him even by those who belong to the opposite camp. For instance, when at the time of the imperial sacrifice (*Rajasuya Yagnya*), the question as to who should be honoured first among the assembled monarchs is raised, the great Bhishma himself suggests the name of Krishna. He says, 'Midst these monarchs pure in lustre, purest-hearted and most high/ Like the radiant sun is Krishna midst the planets of the sky' (R.C. Dutt's Translation, p.35).

In view of this, it comes as a sad anticlimax to see the great Krishna reduced to a minor character in the novel, where he appears as a regional politician named Dwarakaveetile Krishnakutti Parthasarathi Menon. His entire career is assessed by the 'Voice from the mountain-top, as he lies dying: 'He could have prevented all this but he chose not to act. He remained content with his little fief, giving advice and verse to Arjun, and then went back to his comforts and allowed all this to happen, India has too many Krishnas (?) His brilliance burnt itself out without illuminating the country' (p.414). Surely, this is not how Vyasa saw Krishna's personality and his career.

Curiously enough, in one episode, the novelist seems to concede Krishna's divinity, to which every traditional writer, including Vyasa, has testified. At the time of the disrobing of Draupadi in public by Dusshasan, she makes a frantic appeal to Krishna, whose face suddenly appears on the ceiling, warning Dusshasan of dire consequences (p.382). This one exception apart, Krishna remains a figure of little consequence in the novel. In defence of the novelist, it should be pointed out that none of the political figures during the

years covered in the novel could easily be identified with the Krishna of the *Mahabharata*. Perhaps the invention of a symbolic figure representing the numerous facets of Krishna's personality could have solved the difficulty. This, however, is a question which the novelist alone can answer.

The second major change has even more disastrous consequences militating as it does, against the artistic integrity of the novel. This change concerns Gandhiji's defiance of Salt-law regulations in 1930, according to which there was a compulsory tax levied on salt, for every Indian, rich or poor. This was obviously a preposterous law, and Gandhiji rightly defied it. In the novel, the Salt-tax is replaced by a 'Mango-tax'. This reduces the entire affair to sheer absurdity. There is no comparison possible between Salt and the Mango and their relative necessity in human life. Salt is a primary necessity of human life even for the poorest of the poor, but this can hardly be said about the Mango. Furthermore, Salt is a daily necessity for all, while the Mango is a seasonal fruit, freely available in summer. The transformation of the Salt-March into the 'Mango-March', therefore, mostly produces a comic effect, which is totally unwarranted at the stage at which it appears. The most charitable explanation is that the novelist was suddenly tempted to use the technique of the Burlesque at this point, without pausing to consider whether it would harmonise with the tone and temper of the rest of his narrative.[2]

Was it really necessary to resort to the Burlesque mode like this in a crucial part of the narrative, one may well ask. Tharoor has already found several opportunities for the expression of his wit and humour which are indeed of a high order. His word-play is dazzling, and is seen at its best in the titles of chapters. Each title has a sly, ironic reference to a well-known book, as in 'Midnight's Parents', and 'Passages Through India.' In the title of Book V, 'The Powers of Silence', the allusion is not to a book, but to a concrete object: the Tower of Silence, where the dead are put to final rest in the Zoroasterian faith.

There is excellent use of comic exaggeration, which makes its point in a telling way. For instance, the variety of Indian

delegations at the Round Table Conference is described thus: 'Delegations of India's Untouchables, and its touch-me-nots, representatives of Indians with their foreskins cut off, and Indians with their hair uncut, spokesmen for Left-handed Indians, green-eyed Indians, and Indians who believed the sun revolved round the moon' (p.114). The same strategy is at work, when the novelist describes what happens when the official cartographer, Mr. Nichols (= Mr. Radcliffe), draws up the boundaries between India and Pakistan without actually visiting the areas concerned. In the process, what happens is something preposterous. At one place, the international border runs through the middle of the market, giving the rice-fields to one state and the warehouses to the other. The pig-farm goes to the Islamic state, and the Madrassah tc the state the Muslims are leaving (p.225).

Comic twists given to proper names yield much delicious humour, as in 'Sir Francis Oldwife' (p.300), which refers to Sir Francis Younghusband, the conqueror of Tibet. There are intelligent puns, as in 'Public enema number one' (p.113), and twisted quotations as in 'Colonialism ... cannot bear very much hilarity' (p.125).

The various verse interludes in the narrative are in the tradition of the ancient Indian narrative called *'Champu-kavya'*, which combines prose and verse. Some of these interludes also contribute to the comic effect in various ways. There is a fine example of sly, ironic allusion with a dash of parody added to it in the quartet describing the people who flocked to Gangaji's ashram: 'Groupies with rupees, and large solar topies,/ bakers and fakers and enema-takers/ Journalists who prompted his causewity their pen/ These were among his favourite men' (p.68). The sudden reference to the well-known film, *The Sound of Music*, comes as a shock of amused surprise. Similarly, Pandu is supposed to learn of Gangaji's philosophy of 'Opposing caste/ *Unto the Last*'(Italics mine). The sudden reference to Ruskin here administers a similar shock. The comic rhymes occur frequently, imparting a colouring of the doggerel to many of the verses, as in 'Toga/Yoga' (p.67) and 'Button/ Gluttonth(s) (p.189).

By virtue of its thematic strategy, *The Great Indian Novel*

invites comparison with James Joyce's *Ulysses*. In both the novels, there is an attempt to run a continuous parallel between modernity and antiquity. By restricting his narrative to a single day, and his locale to the city of Dublin, Joyce secures for his narrative a powerful concentration of effect. Working as he does, on a much larger canvas, Tharoor cannot claim as much. Furthermore, as Walter Allen points out, 'By basing his story in Homer, Joyce expresses the universal in the particular: Bloom, Dedalus, and Marion Bloom become modern versions of archetypal figures and we are to feel the presence of the archetypes behind them.'[3] Rolf Loehrich goes even a step further and argues that *Ulysses* contains a code in which Joyce has expressed his views 'on the riddle of man's existence.... *Ulysses* is a revelation in the framework of modern man's thought.'[4] Again, *The Great Indian Novel* has an exclusively political orientation, which roots it clearly in a specific time and a place. But then this was exactly what the novelist was apparently trying to do. And this he has certainly done so well that it would be churlish to complain about what he did not do. And to have evoked a comparison with a masterpiece like *Ulysses* may itself certainly be considered no mean achievement.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1]Shashi Tharoor, *The Great Indian Novel* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1989), p.85. All further references to this work appear in parentheses in the text.

[2]If one may make a suggestion, with due apologies to the novelist for trespassing into his domain, wouldn't a tax on Breathing, levied on every citizen have been far more appropriate than the Mango-Tax? Breathing is as basic a necessity as Salt (or even more). And the calculation of the tax (by the Government doctor) would have provided many opportunities for comedy.

[3]Walter Allen, *The English Novel* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1954), p.353.

[4]Rolf Loehrich, 'Blurb,' *The Secret of 'Ulysses'* (London: Peter Owen, 1955).

SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *SHALIMAR THE CLOWN*: THE ENIGMA OF TERRORISM

O.P. Mathur

Salman Rushdie's multi-stranded novel, *Shalimar the Clown*,[1] has received wide acclaim. For instance, John Sutherland, Chairman of the Booker Prize Committeee, thinks that Rushdie is "at his best" in this novel.[2] Feeling that "writing is my way of understanding things in this world,"[3] the novelist in *Shalimar the Clown* tries to understand the global phenomenon of terrorism, especially in Kashmir, through the psyche of Shalimar, a terrorist, who, with his personal anguish and dilemmas, seems to be representative of quite a number of other terrorists. His clown-like identity highlighted in the title of the novel is, as Rushdie himself has clarified, to make people realise that he "couldn't simply be put into a box labelled 'bad guy.'"[4] In fact, the novel may be said to be a deep plumbing into the phenomenon of inter-relatedness of different persons and places spread over about two decades and two major continents, "where everyother's story is a part of everyone else" (p.269). As a corollary, one cannot always precisely define a terrorist's real identity or motivations which may often be fractured.

Shalimar the Clown practically fits into Mark Schorer's observation that the technique of the novel leads to the discovery of "nearly everything"[5] in the novel. Thus, though *Shalimar the Clown* begins on a note of nervous foreboding quickly followed by gruesome murder and soon ending with another murder, the final shooting down of the terrorist is in self-defence. Most of the events that precede and explain this doubly gory finale are often narrated ironically by the omniscient author who has designed the pattern of this geo-political love-triangle. It presents a large number of well realised characters, and through the chronologically contrasted atmosphere of Kashmir makes us row "through Paradise on a river of Hell."[6]

Rushdie's vision of a paradise on earth is introduced in the 'bad story' of Shalimar the terrorist — the Kashmir of the days of Rushdie's grandparents to whom the novel is dedicated — which is full of fun and frolic, peace and harmony, beauty of human life and

nature, incarnated in the village of Pachigam (i.e. Panchhigram, or 'birdsville'), a name suggestive of the poetry of life, in which all the festivals of the Hindus and the Muslims are celebrated together, and Abdulla Noman, the father of the future terrorist, plays the part of Lord Rama. The narrator recalls the days:

> Who tonight are the Hindus? Who are the Muslims? Here in Kashmir our stories sit side by side on the same double bill, we eat from the same dishes, we laugh at the same jokes. (p.71)

Rushdie admits that this story of Kashmir was the germ of the novel, that his own family originally belonged to Kashmir which he had been trying to enter imaginatively before, and that the vanishing art form of travelling players touched him very much: "These people really stayed with me. That's really where it was born...."[7] He also mentions that he had done a lot of research watching documents and reading newspapers, books and magazines, for he had not been there in 20 years since 1987.

The terrorists causing the ultimate erasure of Pachigam (except its national existence on the map of Kashmir), like that of Raja Rao's Kanthapura by the British oppressors, touches Rushdie's heart-strings and makes him express his pro-Indian slant through the mouth of Col. Kackchwaha, not without a flavour of irony, partially even at the Indian stand:

> Kashmir was an integral part of India.... Not to accept this was to lack integrity and implicity or explicitly to question the unquestionable integrity of those who did accept it.... When the truth and integrity conflicted it was integrity that had to be given precedence. (p.96)

Of course, Rushdie does not accept the status of any part of Kashmir as free or 'Azad', placing this word within quotes. About the LOC, as it is now called, he is pungently ironical about the unilateral declaration of Cease Fire by India:

> The de facto partition that resulted from this decision would be easy to call a mistake if it were not illegal to do so.... The decision was the correct decision because it was the decision that had been taken. (p.97)

To the demand for 'freedom' for the "tiny landlocked valley with barely five million people" Rushdie is bitterly opposed:

> Where did this kind of thinking get you? If Kashmir for the Kashmiris, why not Assam for the Assamese, Nagaland for the Nagas? ... Why shouldn't towns or villages declare independence? Why not demand freedom for one's

> bedroom, or call one's toilet a republic? Why not stand still and draw a circle round your feet and name that 'Selfistan'. (pp.101-102)

Such emphatic pronouncements and calling Kashmir as "rest of India" (p.282) make Rushdie's stance against any secession very clear. In one of his earlier novels *Shame* he had already praised the Bangladeshis for paying the secessionists (Pakistanis) in their own coin.[8]

Rushdie is also clear about Pakistan being the source of the terrorists or Mujahideens as also of the weapons they have (p.271). The American Ambassador to India Max or Maximilian Ophuls (a fictitious character) has been helping these operations, as conveyed to Shalimar by a boy Zahir (p.272) and also admitted by Ophuls himself in his last speech by calling these terrorists as "Pakistan-sponsored fanatics" (p.385).

To shift the focus from the Pakistani terrorists to the making of an Indian terrorist — initially a smart, handsome and lovable boy Shalimar — we have to return to the paradisical Pachigam which is visited by Ambassador Ophuls who soon becomes enamoured of the beauty of Boonyi, who happens to be Shalimar's wife. Herself bored by the 'prison' of a 'paradise' and eager to see the world, she, like Eve, is easily tempted and eagerly accepts the Ambassador's offer of a change and quietly leaves with him, soon to become his pampered sex-object, and, inspite of all his precautions, manages to become pregnant. Now he makes her pack up for Pachigam where, having been already declared dead, she is made by her father to lead an isolated life like that of a ghost. In course of time she gives birth to a girl who is named 'Kashmira' there and later 'India' — a name given to her by Max Ophuls, her biological father — when she goes to live with him. The two names given to the same girl symbolise the oneness of Kashmir and India, thus contradicting the stand of the terrorists, one of whom is ironically her legal father Shalimar.

The Islamisation of Kashmir, as Rushdie points out, had begun with mass conversions in 1320. But some difference had begun to be felt with the incursion of the tribals in 1947, the year of Shalimar's birth. But life in Pachigam begins to be felt with the arrival of 'iron

mullahas' in the eighties who condemn harmony and tolerance and want to rid Kashmir of indian troops and the Pandits. In their political front, which Shalimar joins, his performances and clownings acquire "a new ferocity" (p.231). The departure of his wife Boonyi with Max Ophuls fans his terrorist zeal. After taking an oath of revenge he becomes "an unplugged automaton" (p.236). Around this time he takes another oath of complete loyalty to the cause of terrorism: "I cleanse myself of everything except the struggle! Without the struggle I am nothing" (p.268)! To demonstrate his total obliteration of his past and the adoption of a new identity, he puts off all his clothes in front of Balbul Fakh, a leader of the terrorist group. But what about his earlier oath of revenge? It has not been wasted out and his denuding himself of his clothes was almost like the theatrical performance of his early career, for "*he almost believed his performance,* almost believed that he was no longer what he was and that he could indeed leave his past behind him" (p.268. Emphasis added). Shalimar finds a soul-companion, another "fighter-killer" (p.269) in Midanao who also has the object of killing Max Ophuls. This highlights an important point that terrorism was not 24-carat pure in its object: it was plentifully alloyed.

The novelist describes in some detail the terrorists' imposition of their Islamic agenda by killing all those who neither join them nor run away from Pachigam, a symbol of the Valley. Its atmosphere is thoroughly transformed and thus Pachigam is totally depopulated. The Hindu Pandits, driven out of the Valley, evoke the author's deep sympathy, for, inspite of the huge army and the vast sums 'spent' on the 'development' of Kashmir, the erstwhile prosperous Pandits had to lead the life of migrants in slum-camps with frugal facilities. Sore about the scenario, the novelist asks and asks, "Why was that why was that why was that why was that why was that (p.297)?

In such a condition Shalimar gets an opportunity to go to Pachigam for accomplishing the first item of his revenge, viz. to kill his faithless wife Boonyi who was actually waiting to be rid of her lonely miserable life by him. She almost orders him to murder her, only to be promptly obliged by him. His first revenge having been

accomplished, Shalimar has now the freedom to join "the *phantom* world of the run" (p.319. Emphasis added), though now his real object of revenge is Max Ophuls. As a good fighter-killer he is made to operate at international level and thus gets an opportunity to go to U.S.A. Once there he reaches the town where Max Ophuls lives and manages to become his trusted driver-cum-valet. He soon learns that Boonyi's daughter by Max also lives in the same town. The fact that India, as she is called now, and Max are on affectionate terms, makes him hunger for revenge on both. The first point of culmination is the media-shy Max's political but highly undiplomatic speech dwelling upon the atrocities committed by the terrorists in Kashmir and his sympathy for the Pandits and also for the Muslims of the state. After the T.V. anchor's scissoring off the latter portion, the speech arouses Shalimar's anger which is raised almost to the level of fury on overhearing the bombarding comments of a Muslim actress Zainab Azam whom he is driving home, and his response is ominously significant, "For every O' Dwyer there is a Shaheed Udham Singh, and for every Trotsky a Mercader awaits" (p.30). With a similar determination, he first submits his resignation the very next morning to Max Ophuls who, feeling apprehensive, asks him to drive to his daughter (biological for him and legal for Shalimar) at the door of whose house sudden death awaits him in the form of Shalimar's knife. It seems that Max is killed at that point of time by a furious terrorist rather than by a betrayed husband.

Finally caught and sentenced to death, largely on the basis of the revengeful but firm and unambiguous testimony of his own legal daughter India mainly for the murder of her mother Boonyi, Shalimar remains in his cell doing "slow-motion dancelike exercises" and sometimes "simply sitting cross-legged on the floor with his eyes closed and his hands lying open on his knees, with his palms upturned" (p.387). Is all this some Indian traditional dance or Hindu meditation-like posture due to some ancient gene now surfacing at such a critical time when his life seems to be nearing its end? But Shalimar does not forget the next item of his agenda, the murder of his illegal step-daughter India. His youth, along with all its clowning shows, wakes up and, after his jail-break by jumping

over the wall, almost walking on air as he did in his Pachigam days, he rushes to India's house with his favourite weapon the knife, but he does not get any opportunity to use it, for, already apprehensive, India had put on her darkness-goggles and switched off all the lights, and, already well-trained in archery, shoots him dead with her traditional weapon, the bow and arrow, so much celebrated in Indian myth and tradition. Is it Rushdie's forecast that India, that is also Kashmira, will ultimately be triumphant over the demon of terrorism. The novelist had earlier called the "blind, inky inky night" of the arrival of terrorism in Pachigam as the beginning of "the time of demons", also referring to Rahu and Ketu existing without actually existing and "pulling and pushing, intensifying and suppressing, inflaming and stifling, dancing out the moral struggle within human beings while remaining invisible in the brightening heavens." And the common people had fled with their entertaining celebrations incomplete, leaving behind "the unexploded fireworks. Ravan, Kumbhakaran and Meghnath glowered across the trembling valley whether they were Hindus and Muslims" (pp.88-89). They do explode frightfully causing universal destruction. But the "time of demons" symbolically ends in another "blind, inky night" in which India, i.e. Kashmira, like another Ram, shoots the demon down, making not one incident only, but the whole novel "a metaphor made real" (p.88). The title of the novel seems to retain the word 'clown' not only to define the continuing identity of Shalimar but also to suggest that all terrorism is clownish, i.e. essentially ephemeral and stupid, like the head of an ass superimposing all the ten heads of the 'learned' Ravana.

Thus *Shalimar the Clown* is almost an epic of the times not only in its "open form with contingency and looseness,"[9] but also because it is characterised by most of the qualities of the epic mentioned by Northrop Frye — "moral, confession, anatomy and romance."[10] The omniscient novelist with the vastness of his vision and the encompassing point of view through which "the stream of conscience," "the fundamental form of the novel,"[11] runs consistently supporting the right seriously or ironically. Through its powerful yet sensitive, labyrinthine narration of the ambivalences of a terrorist's

life and its giving the feel of the movement of time, *Shalimar the Clown,* as Ron Charles remarks, is a blend of different genres: "Modern thrillers, Ramayan epic, courtroom drama, slapstick comedy, wartime adventure, political satire, village legend."[12]

Perhaps *Shalimar the Clown* can also be called a "contrast-epic,"[13] embodying 'holy' terrorism adulterated with 'secular' motives, the diametrically anti-podal placing of the past and the present in the Valley, the chasm between the desirable and the actual, the gory theme and its usually light and ironical treatment. Perhaps it is one of the most representative of the modern epical novels both contemporary and timeless in its discourse. As a reviewer has put it so well, "... its emotional scope reaches so far beyond our current crisis and its vision into the vagaries of the heart is so perceptive that one can imagine *Shalimar the Clown* being read long after this age of sacred terror has faded into history."[14]

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[4]Alastair Reid, quoted in David Robinson's Review in *The Scotsman,* 29 Aug. 2005 (from Internet).

[5]Mark Schorer, 'Technique as Discovery' in James L. Calderwood and Harold Toliver, *Perspectives on Fiction* (London: O.U.P., 1968), p.200.

[6]From Agha Shahid Ali's poem printed as an epigraph in *Shalimar the Clown.*

[7]Rick Moody's Interview with Rushdie, *Vanity Fair,* 18 Aug. 2006, p.1.

[8]Salman Rushdie, *Shame* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 1983), p.87.

[9]Malcolm Bradbury, *Possibilities* (London: O.U.P., 1973), p.10.

[10]Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton University Press, 1973), p.312.

[11]Alan Friedman, 'The Stream of Conscience' in *Perspectives on Fiction, Op. Cit.,* p.383.

[12]Review by Ron Charles in *Deccan Chronicle,* Sept. 18, 2005, p.1 (By arrangement with the Washington Book World).

[13]Northrop Frye, *Op. Cit.,* p.317.

[14]Review by Ron Charles in *Deccan Chronicle, Op. Cit.*

SAVITRI OF THE *MAHABHARATA* AS AN EPITOME OF INDIAN CULTURE WITH REFERENCE TO WOMANHOOD

Koushik Bhattacharjee

Refracted through centuries of usage, the word 'culture' has acquired a number of different connotations. It is associated with both the past and the future. In the past it had a sacred function and was posited against the wasteland of contemporary life. Its association with the future brings before us a utopia where labour and leisure would exist together. The one definition of culture which is familiar to most of us is that culture is a standard of aesthetic excellence. It is derived from an appreciation of aesthetic form such as literature, art, etc. The second meaning of culture refers to a way of life:

> It expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning, but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour. The analysis of culture, from such a definition, is the clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life.[1]

True, culture involves the relationship between life and literature. Without appreciating good literature, we cannot understand the nature of a particular society and secondly literary critical analysis can be applied to certain social phenomena so as to illuminate their meanings for individuals and societies. This requires a literary sensibility to read society.

It is with this reconciliation between literature and life that the present paper chooses one female character from the *Mahabharata* — Savitri. The legend of Savitri is narrated in Chapter 248 named the "Vana-Parva" of the epic. The narrator is sage Markandeya who tries to console Yudhishtira by narrating first the story of Sri Rama in detail, but Yudhishtira is not consoled and hence says:

> O mighty sage, I do not so much grieve for myself or these my brothers or the loss of my kingdom as I do for this daughter of Drupada.... Hast thou ever seen or heard of any chaste and exalted lady that resembleth this daughter of Drupada?[2]

And this prompts Markadeya to narrate the legend of Savitri in seven cantos consisting of about seven hundred lines in Sanskrit with great restraint and gracefulness.

Savitri is the daughter of Asvapati, the king of Madra, who had performed penance for eighteen years in the hope of begetting sons. But instead of sons, the king begets a daughter. She is named Savitri after the Goddess with whose blessings she is born. She is extremely beautiful with lotus-like eyes, slender waist, ample hips, elephantine gait, etc.Overpowered by her celestial beauty no one dares marry her. It is on account of this that Asvapati asks her to seek a husband equal to her in qualities. In the next canto we find Savitri telling Narada and her father that she has chosen Satyavan, known as Chitraswa, as her husband and that she has given her heart to him. When Narada tells them that Satyavan will die within a year, Asvapati asks her to choose another man as her husband. But Savitri, with utmost meekness and unwavering mind, tells her father:

> The death can fall but once; a daughter can be given away but once and once only can a person say I give myself away. These three things can take place only once. Indeed, with a life short or long, possessed of virtues or bereft of them, I have, for once, selected my husband. Twice I shall select nc:. (2. 294. 27-8)

This is one of the greatest utterances found in any culture past or present. The great sage Narada is completely flabbergasted by her resolution.

The marriage takes place in the third canto. Savitri discards her rich clothes and ornaments and quietly accepts the life of hermitage. She wins the affection of her in-laws by her obedience. She wins her husband's trust and love by her honied words and love. Though Narada's prophecy about Satyavan's impending death haunts her mind all the time, yet she keeps smiling and never fails in her duties to her in-laws and her husband.

In the fourth canto, when hardly four days are left to the preordained day, she observes the *triratra* vow — fasting, praying and standing night and day. When her father-in-law dissuades her from keeping such a vow, she tells him of her resolution:

> I have for certain undertaken this task with perseverance and perseverance is the cause of the successful observance of vows. (4. 296. 6)

When the fateful day arrives, she offers oblations to the flaming fire and bowing down before the aged Bhahmins and her in-laws she

receives their benediction that she should never suffer widowhood. When Satyavan sets out for the forest, she tells him that she wants to accompany him. Neither he nor her in-laws are able to stop her from accompanying him.

In the fifth canto we see the great battle between predestination and individual will power, between love and death. Savitri resolutely follows Yama. First, she convinces Yama that as Satyavan's wife it is her foremost duty to follow her husband wherever he goes. Secondly, she tells him that she is following him as a friend:

> It has been declared by wise men endued with true knowledge that by walking only seven paces with another, one contacteth a friendship with one's companion. (5. 297. 23)

After having forged this friendship with Yama she talks of the four modes of life and of religious merit as the foremost of all things. Yama is mighty pleased with her. He is willing to bestow upon her any boon. She is wise enough to knows that at this point it would be too hasty to ask for Satyavan's life. So she seeks the restoration of the eyesight for her father-in-law. This boon is granted but she continues to follow Yama. This time her argument is that first of all she is not tired in the presence of her husband and secondly she gives great importance to the company of Yama. She says:

> Even a single interview with the pious is highly desirable; friendship with them is still more so. And intercourse with the virtuous can never be fruitless, therefore one should live in the company of the righteous. (5. 297. 30)

Yama is greatly pleased by these references to his virtues and righteousness. So he asks her for a second boon. Even this time she asks something for her father-in-law; she wishes that he may regain his lost kingdom. After granting this second boon, Yama again dissuades her from following him. This time she appeals to his sense of lawfulness and goodness — "The good show mercy to even their foes when they seek their protection." Yama finds her words as sweet as water to a thirsty soul, and he asks her to have another boon except the life of Satyavan. This time she asks for her father one hundred sons to perpetuate his race. When the third boon is granted, she extols the great parentage of Yama and his justice:

> Thou art the powerful son of Vivaswat.... And, O Lord, since thou dealest out

> equal law unto all created things, thou hast been designated the Lord of Justice. ... every one wisheth particularly for intimacy with the righteous. (5. 297. 41-3).

Enraptured by her words, Yama asks her to have another boon but with the same condition, i.e. except the life of Satyavan. This time she asks for herself and Satyavan one hundred sons capable of perpetuating their race. Yama, still reeling under the intoxicating flattery of Savitri, has not yet understood the implication of this fourth boon which he grants. She still follows him and he still dissuades her from doing this. He, floored by her honied phrases, asks her for some incomparable boon. This time he has not put any condition as he had done before. Thereupon she speaks of the institution of marriage, the sanctity of married life which is an epitome of a sustaining culture:

> O bestower of honours, the boon thou hast already given me is incapable of accomplishment without union with my husband. Therefore, among other boons, I ask for this, may this Satyavan be restored to life! Deprived of my husband, I am as one dead. Without my husband, I do not wish for happiness. Without my husband, I do not wish for heaven itself. Without my husband, I do not wish for prosperity. Without my husband, I can not make up my mind to live! Thou thyself hast bestowed on me the boon, namely, of a hundred sons; yet thou takes away my husband! I ask for this boon — may Satyavan be restored to life, for by that thy words will be made true. (5. 297. 47-8)

This is how she gets the life of her husband back.

Vyasa has treated this part of the legend with great care and subtlety and it covers about one-fourth of the whole story. The scene between Savitri and Yama remains unparalleled in literature where a woman, all alone, challenges the law of predestination by her strong will. It is her strength of chastity acquired through prayers and vows and the blessings of the elders that enables her to erase all that the moving finger of Fate had written. Both Yama and Savitri behave with each other most politely. She does not plead or beg. She brings a change in the heart of Yama. He realises that behind all sternness he is the lord of Dharma, righteousness, goodness and justice. To the modern mind such a dialogue between a living being and death seems incredible. The only other example of such a conversation is between Nachiketa and death. The skeptics and non-believers may take it as a mere myth of predestination and individual will. At the bidding of the forest sages, Savitri relates the

whole story of love conquering death.

The legend can be compared, though not appropritely, to two Greek myths. The first is that of Orpheus and Eurydice in which the latter dies but the former does not follow her immediately after her death. It is during his wanderings that by chance he enters the under world. His music enchants Pluto and he gets a boon — he can take his wife without looking back. But he does look back and thus loses his wife. The second legend is that of Laodamia and Protesilaus. The element of predestination is there and it is the wife who prays to the gods, but Laodamia gets her husband back only for three hours and after the expiry of those three hours she too dies with him. Thus the similarities between these two myths and that of Satyavan and Savitri are only superficial. The story is also compared to the Egyptian myth of Isis and Osiris. Osiris, as king of Egypt, is married to his sister Isis. One day their brother Seth, an evil person, locks Osiris in a coffin and throws it into the sea. Isis goes in search of her husband's body and brings it back. Seth again finds the body, cuts it into pieces and throws them into the Nile. She again searches for these scattered pieces. But this story is once again very different from that of Satyavan and Savitri. Isis' efforts prove fruitless.

Savitri represents the indian ideal of womanhood. She has great strength of character which is the result of a pure righteous mind. Her resolution never wavers. She has a supreme place among the *pativratas*. Her greatest quality is that she never weeps. Even when Satyavan dies, she does not weep. When Yama proceeds in the southerly direction with the vital essence of Satyavan, she has no tears in her eyes. All through her discourse with the Lord of Death, she acts like a cool, calculating person who never gives up. Every other character in this story weeps except Savitri. Satyavan's parents weep out of their helplessness and complete dependence on Satyavan as is narrated to Savitri by Satyavan himself after his life is restored back to him by Lord Yama. Satyavan himself weeps. Savitri's calm tearless eyes do not show a hardhearted woman without feelings for others but reflects her firm purpose. She cannot be called an Amazon. Strangely, Romesh Chandra Dutta in his verse rendering of the *Mahabharata* (1898)

portrayed her as a weeping woman and thus "took away the very strength of which Savitri is built."[3]

There is another angle from which we can look at Savitri. Markandeya narrates her story as an example of chaste woman in reply to Yudhistira's question: "Have you ever seen or heard of any chaste woman who resembles this daughter of Drupada?" Chastity with reference to a married woman seems to be a kind of paradox, specially in case of Draupadi who is married to five men. But in Indian tradition Ahilya, Draupadi, Sita, Tara and Mandodari are called Panch Kanya — "Panch Kanyam smarennityam mahapatka nasanam." Thus the great seer Markandeya has placed Savitri along with the five chaste wives of India. But before Savitri the rest of them appear to be passive figures. Draupadi is comparatively more vocal but she is avenged by her five husbands. Sita too is rescued by her husband Rama. Sita follows her husband in the exile in forest as part of ancient Indian tradition that a wife should follow her husband. It is Savitri who follows her dead husband's soul and rescues him like a hero. Ahilya, Tara and Mandodari dwindle into insignificance when compared to Savitri. Ahilya remains a woman who suffers the wrath of her husband Gautam unjustly without ever getting a chance to prove her innocence, while Draupadi and Sita suffer and cry and are rescued by their husbands. It is Savitri alone who rescues her husband. Besides, it is she alone who chooses her husband and remains firm about her choice even after learning from Narada that Satyavan will die in a year; on the other hand, Sita and Draupadi are won in *Swayamvara.*

Perhaps it is because of three things in her — she does not weep; like a male hero, she rescues her husband; and like a man, she herself chooses her husband — that the legend of Savitri has not much appealed to many poets and storytellers. In contrast, much has been written about Sita, Draupadi and Ahilya that can be called reinterpretation or transcreation. However, the story of Savitri has been retold in several languages. In Sanskrit we find it retold in *Matsya Purana, Brahma-Vaivarta Purana*, etc. Then it figures in the translations of the *Mahabharata* in a number of languages. Toru

Dutt has recounted the original in French and English. Curiously enough, the only great recreation of this legend is found in Sri Aurobindo's great epic *Savitri* consisting of twelve books; the 700 lines of the *Mahabharata* are expanded to 24000 lines. But in his hands it does not remain a human story and is given profound spiritual meaning. Asvapati's 18 year austerities are explored as various stages of the inner world travelled. It takes almost half of the epic to map the Aurobindonian still centre of reality after tearing veil after veil. Savitri's quest for Satyavan too has benn elaborated and described in five cantos of Book VII; it is treated as Savitri's quest of her soul and covers about 125 pages. Besides, spiritual yogic dimensions are given to this quest. Moreover, Sri Aurobindo's Savitri is always aware that she is a divine being, descended on the earth to rescue truth from the darkness of death.

In his brilliant essay, "Savitri: Old and New,"[4] Vidyut Aklujkar talks about another such recreation of Savitri in a Tamil story by K. Santhanam. Aklujkar also cites the names of two stories in which the heroines are called Savitri, though they present a sharp contrast to the *Mahabharata* legend of Savitri — one is Dharmvir Bharti's "Savitri No. 2" in Hindi[5] and the other one is Sivasankari's "Parvai" in Tamil.

What I feel is that it is time for our modern poets and story tellers to give Savitri her due place by recreating and reinterpreting her heroic exploits. Let her not become just a word of blessing to the newly weds because she is much more than that — she is the epitome of Indian ideal of womanhood.

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DALIT AESTHETIC THEORY

S.R. Jalote

Dalit Aesthetic Theory has similarities with the theories of subaltern literature, African American literature as well as with Problem play, and Drama of Ideas. It is indigenous and is firmly rooted in the history, politics and culture of Dalits. In Indian literature the use of untouchability as a theme is not new. Caste consciousness is a motif in the writings of the 14th century Saint-poet Chokhamela, Kabir, Ravidas, Jyotiba Phule, Mahatma Gandhi, and Tagore. But it is the portrayal of agonizing reality and the expression of a radical revolt against the age-old defective traditions, conventions and dogmas of Hindu religion used as motif which define Dalit literature. Contemporary Dalit literature portrays the dreadful and humiliating events of the Dalit world. Dalit literature tells us about the cultural conflict of the socially, economically and culturally deprived and disadvantaged group of people. It requires literature to be revolutionary, didactic and doctrinaire.

With regard to the definition of Dalit literature most of the writers and critics are of the view that Dalit literature is not the literature of a particular caste. M.N. Wankhade defines it in the following words:

> The word 'Dalit' does not refer only to Buddhists and backward class people, but also to all those who toil and are exploited and oppressed. This definition is in accordance with that given by Babu Rao Bagul in the Dalit literary conference at Mahad.[1]

Arjun Dangle, in his essay entitled "Dalit Literature: Past, Present and Future," enumerates the common points regarding the role of Dalit literature and its literary value. He remarks that "Dalit literature is not separatist" and that "Dalit literature is not restricted only to Buddhists (i.e. the Mahars of yesteryear)."[2] For Dalit writers the literature, which deals with the oppression of the Dalit due to the disparaging and thereby defective dogmas of Hindu religion, defines Dalit literature, irrespective of the fact whether the literature is written by a Dalit or by an upper caste writer.

Arjun Dangle, while expressing his views on "New Connotations of the Word 'Dalit'," observes:

> When Dalit literature began to be talked about, a number of doubts were raised as to its nature.... Initially the discussion centred around Buddhist (or

> Mahar) youths as they led the movement. Later on it was realized that while defining Dalit literature, Dalit writers and intellectuals had clearly stated that it was not the literature of a particular caste. Their stand from the beginning is broad-based and well-developed.
>
> Let us now see what is Dalit literature and who are Dalit writers. Is Dalit literature the literature of those born in Dalit caste?
>
> Dalit literature is one which acquaints people with the caste system and untouchability in India, its appalling nature and its system of exploitation. In other words, Dalit is not a caste but a realization and is related to the experience, joys and sorrows, and struggles of those in the lowest stratum of society. It matures with a sociological point of view and is related to the principles of negativity, rebellion and loyalty to science, thus finally ending as revolutionary.[3]

Arjun Dangle is not of the view that only Dalits can write this kind of literature because "experiences are not simply stated but their meaning is also explained." He observes:

> It is out of this realization that the Dalits consider works such as the poetry of Narayan Surve, *Ek Gav Ek Panvatha* by Baba Adhava or *Javha Manas Jaga Hoto* by Godavari Parulekar as their own. They also feel one with the Samantar literary movement in Hindi. On the other hand the works of some Dalit writers are seen as being suffocated by white-collar traditional values.
>
> The difference between the works of the two kinds of writers is not just because of their castes but also due to differing experiences and their ways of interpreting them. Thus, though caste is at the root of most Dalit literature, as its literary manifestation is based on its experiences, the horizons of Dalit literature are expanding. But the non-Dalit writers do not like to call themselves Dalits....[4]

In his essay entitled "What is Dalit Literature?" Sharatchandra Muktibodh holds that Dalit literature is the product of the Dalit consciousness. He further says:

> The nature of Dalit consciousness is obviously not subjective. It is true that pains and pleasures are lived and experienced by individuals alone but the sufferings of the Dalits are common and are attributable to common reasons. Hence their content is essentially social.[5]

Muktibodh is of the view that "an outstanding work of Dalit literature would be born only when Dalit life would present itself from the Dalit point of view."[6]

Though none of the Dalit writers and critics has so far stated that only Dalits can write Dalit literature, Eleanor Zelliot holds a contrary view when she says:

> Those in the Dalit school would say: Yes, there is Dalit literature. Only Dalits

> can write it because only they have experienced the social as well as the economic problems of the lowest of castes. And when educated and no longer poor, they not only remember their childhood, they also suffer from the idea of pollution which remains strong in the Hindu mind, and they identify with their village brothers and sisters who are still subject to outrageous treatment when they claim their full human rights.[7]

As Ambedkar was an integrationist, the above views voiced by Zelliot are not commensurate with either Ambedkar's ideas or with the ideas of Dalit writers and critics. In his struggle against *Varnashramdharma* and disparaging the laws of Hindu religion, Ambedkar's staunch supporters were also caste Hindus.

The problem of untouchability alone is not the primary concern of Dalit literature. It is Ambedkarite literature which is known as Dalit literature. Both Mahatma Gandhi and Babasaheb Ambedkar were champions of the cause of the Dalit. But it is the literature influenced by Ambedkar's ideas instead of Gandhi's thoughts which defines Dalit literature. Despite their common concern, Ambedkar and Gandhi were often at odds in their programmes for the cause of the Dalit. Though Gandhi was for the abolition of untouchability, he held the firm view that *varna* system must remain. According to Gandhi *varna* system was a divine institution and hereditary occupation should be followed by all,[8] but *jati* division should be abolished.[9] Untouchability arose out of aberration of the *varna dharma*, for all men were born equal.[10] According to him, temples, schools, colleges and jobs must be open to untouchables.[11] Ambedkar's goal stood in marked contrast to Gandhi's "Ideal Bhangi"[12] who would continue to do sanitation work and his status would be equal to that of a Brahmin. According to Ambedkar, "Mr. Gandhi's attitude is that let Swaraj perish if the cost of it is political freedom of the Untouchables."[13] Ambedkar sought to bring about equal social, political and economic opportunity for all.

Hence, that literature is not Dalit literature which only deals with the sufferings of Dalits and the problems of untouchability and yet upholds *Varnashramadharma* and the caste system of Hindu religion. A Dalit work of art pleads for the annihilation of caste system and integration of Dalits in the main stream. In Dalit literature there is a message that Indian society has built a trap for the Dalit which

creates intolerable tensions and frustrations. It debunks and decries some of the social norms of Hindu religion and philosophy. The theory of *Chaturvarna* is repugnant to Buddha and also to the Dalit. Dalit literature does not feel shy of condemning such defective norms of Hindu religion and philosophy as laid down in the *Bhagwatgita, Buddhayan Dharma Sutra, Yogavashishtha, Manu Smriti*, and *Ramachritmanasa*. In the *Bhagwatgita*, Lord Krishna says:

> Oh Arjuna! Being refuged in me even they who are of sinful origin as women, Vaishyas and Shudras also attain to the Supreme Goal. (Chapter IX, Verse 32)

Dalit writers reject the theory of "sinful origin" and that of *Karma*, i.e. because of the *Karmas* or deeds of our previous lives one is born a woman and the other a *Shudra* and so on.

Likewise, Dalit literature challenges and denounces the values of Indian religion and philosophy which ordain that the offspring of *pratiloma* marriages are *chandals*. In Hindu religion one finds two types of inter-*varna* marriages. One type of inter-*varna* marriage is known as anuloma (hypogamous) marriage, i.e. the marriage of a higher *varna* man with a lower *varna* woman, which is tolerated but not encouraged. But the other *pratiloma* (hypergamous) marriage, i.e. the marriage of a lower *varna* man with a higher *varna* woman, is unequivacally condemned. According to Manu the offspring of hypergamous marriages are "outcastes."[14] Inevitably, hypergamous marriage stands out as an important theme of Dalit literature. Girish Karnad's play named *Tale-Danda* (1993) deals with the problem of hypergamous marriage which is considered to be sacrilegious according to Hindu religion. The theme of *Tale-Danda* is the marriage of a Brahmin girl with an untouchable boy which spurted out violence and bloodshed in the city of Kalya. However, Rahul Katyayan's play entitled *Singh Vijaya* (1991) offers a foil to *Tale-Danda*. In this play, Ajaya Prakash, the Dalit hero, overcomes his limitations and finally attains academic excellence and a high position of a lecturer in Physics at the University of Allahabad. He happily marries Richa, a Brahmin girl and his class-mate, and her parents see in him a worthy son-in-law.

African American literature is primarily segregationist, whereas Dalit literature is essentially integrationist. Babu Rao Bagul

observes:

> Dalit literature leads man to just revolution. It teaches equality. Dalit literature does not spread hatred among men but love.[15]

Naturally, African American literature is primarily ethnocentric, while Dalit literature is ameliorative. The former is anti-apartheid as it is a manifestation of the Black's hatred for the White. In Imamu Aamiri Baraka's play titled *The Slave,* Walker Vessels, the Black protagonist, arises as a new revolutionary hero, an "avenger" and a "righteous bomber" whose mission is to eliminate the White.

It is interesting to note that though Gandhi upholds *varna* system of Hindu religion in order to maintain the unity of the people of India, he has no hesitation to recommend *pratiloma* (hypergamous) marriages which are sacrilegious to Hindu religion. Gandhi says: "If I had my way I would persuade all caste Hindu girls coming under my influence to select Harijan husbands."[16] Dalit literature also disregards the ideals upheld by Tulsidas in *Ramacharitamanasa*::

> Devoted to duty each according to his own caste and stage of life, the people trod the path of the Vedas and enjoyed happiness. They knew no fear, nor sorrow nor disease.[17]

Dalit literature also pooh-poohs such ideals as spoken by Rama to Kabandha in *Ramacharitamanasa:*

> A Brahmana, even though he curses you, beat you or speak harsh words to you, is still worthy of adoration: so declare the saints. A Brahmana must be respected, though lacking in amiability and virtue; not so a Sudra, though possessing a host of virtues and rich in knowledge.[18]

Merely denouncing untouchability does not define Dalit literature; it denounces the irrational rationality of *varnashramadharma* which fosters segregation, exploitation and suppression of a community or a group of people. No wonder it encompasses Dalit writers and the writings of non-Dalit writers as well. In June 1923, when Ambedkar began his career as a lawyer, many of his closest associates were caste Hindus with whom he had formed an inter-dining intellectual group. It was a Brahmin, G.N. Sahasrabude, who backed Ambedkar in burning *Manusmriti* in 1927 as a reaction against Hindu orthodoxy of traditional caste restrictions. The intricate laws of Hindu religion in respect of Dalits have often been better understood and exposed by such scholarly upper caste writers as

Girish Karnad than by most of the Dalit writers.

Since Dalit literature opposes exploitation and discrimination in the name of the ideals of *varnashramadharma,* Dalit writers discard myths accepted by Hindu religion. They cannot accept Rama as their ideal because Rama killed Shambhuka, a *shudra,* who was practising penance and also because Rama deserted Sita. Dalit writers view Rama as an oppressor who oppressed Sita, his wife, and persecuted the *shudra.* Dalit writers despise the treatment meted out to Eklavya and insults heaped on Kama. M.N. Wankhade says:

> There is an intimate relationship between literature and myth, and because the Dalit writer has rejected the non-Dalit literature, the absence of myths and tradition has created a vacuum in his writing. It is necessary to create new myths to fill this vacuum. Myths are a link between old and new literature and enable the new to merge easily with the stream of tradition....
>
> Dalit writers will have to find new heroes, their own Rama, Odysseus, and Krishna.[19]

Instead of Rama and Krishna, the legendary heroes of Dalit literature are Shambhuk, Eklavya, Ravidas, Jyotiba Phule, Bhim Rao Ambedkar and so on.

A Dalit work of art is a work of social awareness, and its purpose is to show the ways in which the society is moving. It is for this reason that many Dalit plays are Nukkar plays (street plays), which are meant to be staged in the neighbourhood where people are truly interested in changing the society. Jyotiba Phule, the founder of Satya Shodhak Samaj in 1873, used ballads to disseminate ideas of social reform. Phule's followers continued to utilize ballads and *Tamasha* (Folk Theatre of Maharashtra) to preach the populace.

Dalit writers do not believe in the principle of art for art's sake. According to them art should not be divorced from life. M.N. Wankhade says:

> Actually beauty is a relative concept. I don't believe it is a constant or eternal truth. The concept of beauty is related to the thought of each particular age. At one time kings were the subject of literature, common people were not acceptable subject. But today the life of untouchable quarters and slums has become the subject matter of literature.[20]

Dalit literature is against the observance of artistic rules imposed from without. In it plot, character, dialogue, etc. are subordinated to

the central thought or idea. Action itself tends to become a thesis embodied. It may be argued that any kind of ideological commitment may be inimical to the production of a good work of art, and that there are no strong and great writers in Dalit literature. But Dalit writers' emphatic contention is that art is only justified by its efficient service to life. J.S. Collins remarks:

> The futility of Art for Art's sake controversy lies in the fact that whichever side you take you exclude from literature a long list of great names. Thus, if you say that literature should only be written for a moral purpose you exclude men like Shakespeare and Keats, and if you say that it should be written only for its own sake you exclude men like Swift and Bunyan.[21]

Dalit theatre has similarities with the problem play and the drama of ideas. In a problem play the playwright deals with contemporary sociological problems and the focus is on the defective systems of society. In a Dalit play the problem lies in the defective and yet age-old, time-honoured laws of Hindu religion and philosophy. The protagonists of Dalit literature reject the old morality and develop or adopt a new realistic morality with a view to ameliorating the existing state of affairs in the society. The drama of ideas is a sub-type of the problem play; in it theories and ideas are debated in a witty and humorous manner.

There are similarities between Dalit Aesthetic Theory and Marxist Critical Theory. Both the theories require literature to be revolutionary, didactic and doctrinaire. Dalit Aesthetic Theory diverges from Marxist Critical Theory by placing centrality on caste, and not on economic class. In this connection Arjun Dangle remarks:

> Dr. Ambedkar was not a fierce opponent of Marxism. In the World Buddhist Conference held in Kathmandu in November 1956, when speaking on 'Buddhism and Communism' he maintained that the two were similar. The only difference between the two was that while Marxism does not reject violence to achieve power, Buddhist philosophy emphasizes non-violence, mercy, love, and so on.[22]

A study of Dalit literature as well as that of any other subaltern literature clearly demonstrates that literary theories have never predominated over the sociological analysis of Dalit texts or subaltern texts. Since the root cause of the Dalits' oppression lies in the outmoded dogmas of Hindu religion, a study of Dalit literature is a very sensitive area. But we may expect to arise from this cultural

conflict a harmoniously integrated society based on friendship and amity that has never existed before. Some African American plays such as Richard Wesley's play *The Talented Tenth* and some Dalit plays like Rahul Katyayan's *Singh Vijaya* show how to foster a better relationship between man and man so that men may live in peace and not in conflict with their neighbours. In fact, the formation of a good society is possible only through co-operation and goodwill.

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UNSAFE NESTS: DINA MEHTA'S *GETTING AWAY WITH MURDER* AND MAHESH DATTANI'S *THIRTY DAYS IN SEPTEMBER* AS NARRATIVES OF DISCLOSURE

Seema Malik

Indian Drama today is cognitively contemporary and is engaged with the issues of urgent social and political relevance. The present paper aims at examining critically two Indian English plays that are moored in a living social context — Dina Mehta's *Getting Away with Murder* and Mahesh Dattani's *Thirty Days in September*. Besides the common denominator that both the plays deal with a subject that simmers dangerously below the surface of our consciousness— that is, Girl Child Sexual Abuse —, the two plays both reflect and dialogue with the underlying parameters of the middle class society. The playwrights vividly dramatize the raw emotion and the stark, undiluted reality with remarkable insight and bring to the fore the psyche of the protagonists.

Until recent, the girl child was a neglected agenda in India. If noticed at all, the girl child was seen as a future woman or, as Viney Kirpal says, only as a child-de-sexed, possessing the universal traits of a child.[1] Being marginalized, her experiences, specially of stigmatized nature, are rarely foregrounded. "Child sexual abuse happens because the system of silence encourages some more men to want it to happen; and so the political, societal, cultural and religious attitudes which serve to underestimate the child, specially the female child, create a climate in which abuse can thrive."[2] Instead of being a refuge from the hostile outside world, the natal home quite often becomes the 'unsafe nest' where the protectors turn into predators. But the purpose of theatre is to express what is suppressed and the two plays by Mehta and Dattani are "a provocation, a raging challenge to our orderly pigeon-holing minds ...."[3]

Girl child sexual abuse can be understood as an unwelcome intimate contact for which the girl child is gently encouraged, bribed, tricked, pressurized, coerced or forced to take part. Very often, the abuse begins as an extension of affection and "in an environment

where physical contact, both affectionate and abusive, by relatives of both sexes is not uncommon,"[4] the reaction of the victim is that of confused, ambivalent feelings and one of passive acceptance. C.S. Lakshmi rightly points out that "one assimilates violence as a part of being a woman. Draupadi is humiliated in the Kaurva court, Sita enters the fire to prove her chastity and Ahalya hardens into stone, awaiting her deliverance at the touch of the foot of Rama. The child listens, thinking that this is what it is to be a woman; the attacks on her body seem an inevitable aspect of being female."[5] Thus passive acceptance is built in as a part of gender socialization and due to the existing dominant social hierarchy.

One such sufferer is Mala, the protagonist of Dattani's *Thirty Days in September* who helplessly suffers abuse at the hands of her maternal uncle from the age of seven to thirteen. The play works from within the psyche of the alienated protaganist who is seen bereft of moorings. The story is told in retrospect through the eye of the survivor and moves back and forth with multiple stage sets. It has three space/time zones. The play opens with Mala progressing in therapy, confident and articulate in February 2004. In a flashback the play then moves four years back when she is in her first therapy on September 30, 2001. In the third time/space zone, Mala is seen in different settings at home, at a restaurant alluring a man, at Deepak's home, etc.

While the majority of the victims suffer silently and are miamed not just physically but emotionally and mentally, Sonali in Dina Mehta's *Getting Away with Murder* contrives a way out of the perpetual torment by planning the accident of her tormenter which ultimately leads to his death. The play opens in a restaurant where Sonali comes to meet her friend Malu. Over coffee, she talks to her friend about her recurrent awful headaches, her 'sly, secretive mother-in-law' who spies on her, about her "mother who used to exhaust herself over her household tasks, may be because she was grateful to Uncle for taking us in after Father died...."[6] And then very nervously Sonali requests Malu to persuade their friend Razia, a gynaecologist, to do the amniocentesis test on her because all

she wants is to "trap the elusive chromosome" and "not produce a queue of superfluous daughters."

When Malu tries to dissuade her from indulging in the hideous act of female foeticide she turns hysterical and starts muttering:

> To be born a girl is to be subject to violence and servitude! I know! I know! ... I remember anger from the past ... anger screaming silently inside me, never expressed... the terrors of passivity....(*GAWM* 63-64)

Later in her room, agitated and jittery, she stares intently into the mirror and regresses in time. She begins to speak in a petulant eight year old voice: "Don't want to sit near him, mother. Don't like to be touched, tickled." She remembers the fingers that were not kind, the pain and the eyes always peeping when she took bath.

Sonali's attempt to abort the female foetus, her agitated behaviour, the hysteria, hallucinations — all exhibit post-traumatic stress disorder. The varied psychological disturbances that encompass sexual abuse include psychosis, mostly schizophrenia, depression, guilt, shame, low self-esteem, poor body image, etc. The experience has a life-long impact in terms of victim's feelings towards men and in establishing trusting relationship with them. Besides the feelings of guilt and anger, Sonali is confused over whom to trust. Yet she shares a somewhat stable relationship with her husband Anil. But Mala in Dattani's *Thirty Days in September* refuses to enter into a permanent relationship with Deepak, who admires and respects her. Instead she indulges in promiscuous thirty days affairs' usually with older men and puts a cross in the calender every month after the end of the relationship. She craves for male attention as she suffers from low self-esteem. Once in a coffee house, she tells Deepak that a man was staring at her, and then confesses:

> No. He wasn't staring at me ... I wanted him to .... You want to know what I feel most? If he had looked at me, I would have felt — I would have felt — truly alive.'

The psycho-neurotic behaviour of both the protagonists is the result of buried hatred, pain and the sense of betrayal that torments them. There is lack of disclosure and their experiences remain suppressed due to attitudinal inhibitions. Sonali's friend, Dr. Raziya,

perceptively states: "The human mind is truly remarkable. It 's always patient, it hoards like a miser, it forgets nothing. And sometimes it brings the past and present together in a disconcerting fashion. Perhaps something buried in Sonali's mind is waiting to be disinterred?" (*GAWN* 73). Psychologists greatly emphasize the socially empowering and the therapeutic value of self-disclosure in the context of childhood sexual abuse. Self-disclosure can be understood as "the act of making oneself manifest.. so that one can be perceived by others. There is probably no experience more terrifying than disclosing any aspect of oneself to significant others whose probable reactions are assumed but are not known."[8]

There are many factors that impede disclosure: social hierarchy which demands unquestioning respect for elders; victim blaming is one of the major deterrants to disclosure; and gender socialization is another factor where to be a man means to be sexually experienced and great value is laid on the girl's innocence, and where girls are asked to ignore the incidents of abuse and take them as a part of their lives. It has been rightly pointed out that "difficulties in the language of sexuality, knowledge levels, social conditioning and social responses compound the problem for a child."[9] In the absence of verbal articulation the psychologists greatly emphasize the significance of the non-verbal forms of expression such as drawing, painting or collage through which the victim gives vent to the pent up feelings of entrapment, guilt, shame, etc. When Sonali is unable to express her feelings verbally, she resorts to painting in which inadvertently her Uncle Narottam pops up in weird water-colours, always painted in menacing red.

The increased intensity and recurrence of the erractic behaviour of Sonali and Mala become a cause of concern to Anil and Deepak respectively. Sonali tries to abort herself again without medical aid. Her husband, Anil, tries to dissuade her and consequently in a hysterical fit, Sonali blurts: "My mother never loved me. She had eyes only for Gopal ... and for him" (*GAWM* 86). He urges Gopal to help Sonali, and then Gopal reveals the truth:

> ... my sister was sexually abused ... from the time when she was eight years old. And Sonali was twelve when uncle Narotam broke his head ... night after night ... coming to her bed, the pious swine with sandalwood paste on his

> forehead and holy beads round his neck ... the pig I sometimes I heard them. He ... threatened her into silence ... and submission ... the screams she swallowed must still be tearing her up inside .... And I did nothing to help her, nothing ... hid my face in the bedcovers to distance the nightmare ... (*GAWM* 87-88)

After the disclosure, Sonali gradually returns to normalcy and even continues with her pregnancy because it is now that she has actually got over the negative experiences and her sense of guilt.

Similarly, in *Thirty Days in September*, Deepak sees through the scarred psyche of Mala and takes her to a counsellor where she hesitatingly reveals some truth. But ultimately it is because of Deepak's understanding and loving gestures that Mala unburdens herself. The memory of her uncle's misdeeds haunts her:

> Your uncle loves you .... Don't cry .... This is your seventh birthday, no ? You are seven now. Ready for a real birthday present. Lie down. Come on, quickly.
>
> ---
>
> If they hear you they will say you are a bad girl. This is our secret .... Hold your frock up. Up over your face ! Help me and I will love you more than your mummy or daddy.
>
> ---
>
> Think of your school. Be still and put your arms up, come on. Yees! What did you learn in school today? Hmmm? What ? Tell me.
>
> ---
>
> Thirty days has September, April, June and November. February has twenty-eight. All the rest have thirty-one! Once again. Keep on singing ! Stop only when I stop (*TDS* 43)

She is subjected to continuous abuse and four years later her uncle says, "You have become a whore at thirteen. You like it! You enjoy it" (*TDS* 44), and this accounts for her distorted personality.

However, there is a marked change in her after the disclosure. Her easy manner and the body language reflect that she is at peace with herself. At the counsellor's desk during her last session she says:

> Mala Kahtri . February, 2004 ... I do not hesitate to use my real name now .... After all, it is he who must hide .... He should look the other way .... I have the power to do that now because I know it wasn't my fault ... I know now. (*TDS* 8)

It is with great effort that she gets rid of the guilt of being a 'bad girl' and wins a psychological battle by consciously shunting away the painful memories of her childhood.

The two deterrants to disclosure that prominently emerge in both the plays are: firstly, the image and the socio-economic status of the perpetrator. In the absence of the biological fathers, they are the providers. They project a very clean image and their generosity towards the indigent families leaves no scope for suspicion. Secondly, the silence of the mothers, whether out of complicity or due to helplessness, impedes disclosure. The victims, Sonali and Mala, try to reach out to their mothers but in vain. The betrayal by the mothers is as painful as the abuse. Maya accuses her mother:

> Where were you during those fifteen minutes when he was destroying my soul? Fifteen minutes every day of my summer holidays ... multiplied by thirty or thirty-one .... That's how long or how little it took you to send me to hell for the rest of my life! Surely you must have known, Ma. (*TDS* 53)
>
> This is my hell. Ma! you created it for me. With your silence! You didn't forget anything. You only remained silent! (*TDS* 54)

There are two very evocative recurrent images in *Thirty Days in September* that are not only integral to the thematic engagement of the play but very poignantly bring forth the entire import of the horror and pain of the appalling experience. One is that of a life-sized doll of a seven-year-old girl propped on a chair which symbolizes Maya's childhood torture and the other the dominant presence of a large picture of Shri Krishna to whom Shanta, Maya's mother, very silently turns for solace. It is later revealed that the perpetrator used to abuse his sister, Shanta, ever since she was six. "But my tongue is cut off .... It just fell off .... I cannot shout for help .... I am dumb (*TDS* 55). The continuum of the misdeed by the perpetrator foregrounds the helplessness of the victims and the silence that envelops the issue. It also shows how the abuser exploits the knowledge of this fact and manoeuvres to remain unscathed.

To conclude, both the plays are about healing and recovery and end on a positive note. The involvement, active participation and the crucial role of men have been emphasized. It is only because of their support, concern and understanding that the victims disclose and live life anew. Sonali says: "I still look for the disgust in Anil's eyes ... but all they tell me is I've come home at last." (*GAWN* 91). And for Maya it is:

> Like taking off the bandages on your face after a bloody car crash that left your face all scarred ... and suddenly discover a whole new face again. All of a sudden you feel that you are entitled to life ... I can be a little girl, again. Not again, but for the first time ... I want to taste ice creams ... tell the difference between flavours .... My senses are working again. And for once I could look at Deepak in the eyes and sayl 'I love you' to him and believe it when he says the same to me. (*TDS* 33-34)

In an interview with Anitha Santharam, Mahesh Dattani comments that it is the "silence that affects me most ... I did not want them (upper middle class) to dismiss sexual abuse as something that does not happen to people like them."[10] Indeed, the efficacy of such theatrical texts cannot be denied and it is hoped that their engagement with such issues will certainly bring about attitudinal shifts.

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BOOK REVIEWS

CHARU SHEEL SINGH, *SCRIPTURE ON STONE*

(New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers, 2007), pp.x+108, Rs. 95.00

Krishna Mohan Pandey

Charu Sheel Singh is a well-known name in the creative as well as critical world of English literature. It is really a pleasure to see his seventh volume of poems, *Scripture on Stone,* which contains ten poems in all. They are on well-known mythical, historical and legendary figures and subjects, such as Ram, Raidas, Shabari, Eklavya, Taj Mahal, Gandhi, Meera, Buddha, Kabir and Ganga. Looking apparently unconnected, they focus on the ruptures of time in history to which the poet has dedicated the volume.

Vishnu's sin of beheading Bhragu rishi's wife leads to his incarnation and separation from his wife in Tretayuga in the opening poem 'Ram' and the poet comments:

> If that augurs the
> birth of a God, all
> gods must have sinful
> origins for tales like
> that could be multiplied
> into infinity caught in a
> shell.... (p.4)

The socially-cultured fabrics of Ram's being are criticized for Sita's ordeal and her *vanavasa*: "An ideal / Ram would better had proved / the burden of His own / sanctity before raising a / finger upon Sita's devotional / zone of being" (pp.17-18).

The next poem 'Raidas' traces the hoary clan of Raidas, focusing on Parashuram's anger that converted his clan into *shudras*. The miracles of Raidas like floating of Shiva-linga on the Ganga water or making Meera his disciple by saying (come, I can sew not only your Chappal but you too) are woven in the texture of the poem. The poet questions the tradition which has made Raidas "a scriptural saint of multi-coloured shoes." Referring to the lessons of rupture, he says: "Rupture / lessons bridged rapturous / bodies wherev'r they laid / their fountain-head of truncated desire"(p.31).

It is worth noting that though Singh's poems deal with human variables, they never get strayed away from human constants. It was really a movement of rupture in human history when Dronacharya asked Eklavya's thumb as his *guru-dakshina* and lost his *gurutva*. In the poet's eye, it was the moment when the river Saraswati, the symbol of wisdom and knowledge, sank below the earth because "Guru is not the name/ of a shrub that is thorny to others; guru/ is a lotus canopy that/ showers umbrella petals/ without distinction or/gore" (p.45).

Several poems in the volume focus on guru's significance in the evolution of the individual but the alternative tradition of becoming one's own guru finds space in the poems on Buddha, rightly following 'Eklavya'. The grand narrative of Buddha's life and teaching is also juxtaposed with individual issues of familial scene:

> Buddha's quest was Yashodhara
> and Rahul's orphanage too;
> will the history tell it and
> answer a question or two? (p.87)

The collection is really, as the poet has himself said in his 'Foreword', "open ended since the poems try to re-live history in a neo-historicist modality of experience" (p.vii). These poems unequivocally suggest that "history's interiors are defunct and the mainstream discourses are manipulative versions of figures of representation whose noema and noetic consciousness did not really deserve the foregrounding and foreclosing into the folio pages of history" (p.vii). One can easily notice the confluence of tradition and individual talent not only in Eliot's sense but also in Bloom's.

Charu Sheel Singh's poems give the feel of urban experience in which tradition emerges as having a stronghold on the poet. The free flowing usage of Sanskrit-Hindi vocabulary (*ashram, samadhi, sudarshan, nirakara, sagun, dharmakaya, vajrakaya,* and *pratityasamutpada*, to cite just a few from the large galaxy) in the texture of the poems is really an enriching experience to the Indian English poetry reader. Also, the volume undoubtedly evinces the continuous growth of Charu Sheel Singh the poet.

BINOD MISHRA (ED.), *CRITICAL RESPONSES TO FEMINISM*

(New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2006), pp.xiv+252, Rs.650.00

Krishna Mohan

Binod Mishra's anthology, consisting of twenty essays, is an attempt to record the diverse and complex viewpoints of selected scholars on feminism. The writers discussed in the anthology are: Sylvia Plath, Toni Morrison, Margaret Atwood, Dostoevsky and eminent Indian writers such as Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, Kamala Das, Nayantara Sahgal, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur, Githa Hariharan, Mahesh Dattani, Shauna Singh Baldwin, Indira Goswami and others.

In the first essay D.S. Kaintura establishes a connection between feminism and romanticism and opines that the former has caused a rethinking on the interpretation of the works of the romantic period. Eamy Matthew tries to show how the female concerns in the two novels of F. Dostoevsky have influenced the writers the world over. Ashok Kumar's paper on Margaret Atwood considers feminism as a search for identity. Exploring the world of Nayantara Sahgal, S.K.Yadav traces various shades of feminism in ancient sacred texts. Kamala Das as a feminist arguing for a consummate man-woman relationship has been brought out forcefully by M.Rizwan Khan. In his scholarly paper V.K. Pandey discusses the journey of Shashi Deshpande's heroines from subordination to autonomy and from silence to eloquence.

The two contributors on Anita Desai's fiction present different viewpoints. Brajesh Kumar feels that Desai portrays the inner turmoil of women, denied their individual choices. G.S.Jha, on the other hand, charges Desai's characters with escapism and thinks that the cause of their despair is the principle of detachment followed by them. In her insightful essay Malati Mathur compares the women characters in Deshpande's *Small Remedies* and Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* and she finds them striving to attain their space in a male-congested society.

H.S. Komalesha argues that Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small*

Things is not merely a feministic study but a mix of politics, sex and identity of subversion. But Amarnath Prasad considers the novel to be a pure work of feministic study. In her paper Subhra Tripathi makes a comparative study of two novels of Githa Hariharan, and traces the journey of characters from subjugation to independence through the assertion of their will to struggle. M.K. Mishra traces the plight of women in his study of Mahesh Dattani's *Tara* and comes to the conclusion that women have to achieve a sort of self-realization to overcome their predicament. There are two scholarly essays on the novels of Shobha De. N.K. Neb opines that De's characters fight to get their due but they forget the fact that the real victory of women lies in respecting the physical, emotional and spiritual exigencies within decorum and not in making a mockery of their bodies. In the second paper, Neeraj Kumar finds De's characters excessively weak as they quarrel for physical fulfilment as their due. In his in-depth study of black feminism Sathyaraj Venkatesan argues that it is the result of an interaction of gender with social stratification such as class, religion, race and ethnicity.

Ghanshyam Iyenger expresses the view that Sylvia Plath considers the idea to wage a war against their male counterparts more as ignorance than consciousness on the part of women. In his analysis of Toni Morrison's women Paul Dhanashekharan discovers that they are victimized on the basis of not only their sex but also their skin. According to Ashok Kumar Saini Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman* reflects her disapproval of the negative identity. She is in favour of fostering a positive identity – a single, unified spiritual identity in tune with the spirit of postmodernism. B.B. Mohanty argues for women's fundamental right of motherhood in his comparative study of two short stories by Shauna Singh Baldwin and Indira Goswami. In his concise yet fairly comprehensive study, M.R. Khatri comes to the conclusion that Indian feminism as compared to European feminism is still in the offing.

Binod Mishra's concise introduction to the theme of the anthology is a noteworthy feature of the book. Taken as a whole, *Critical Responses to Feminism* contains a rich intellectual fare for those interested in the understanding of feminism.

MANJU KAPUR, *HOME*

(New Delhi: Random House India, 2006), pp.339, Rs.395.00

Satendra Kumar

Manju Kapur, creative writer and teacher of English at Miranda House, Delhi University, insists that the world she portrays analytically in her novels stems from the intellectual experience of her academic life. Her latest novel *Home* is about the joint family life. "Their marriages augmented, their habits conserved" — this is the principle upon which the family home is built. Children are brought up to protect the same values. All is well as long as they fall in line. For those who rebel, justice is swift and accurate.

In Manju Kapur's new novel, the seemingly tranquil world of a joint family is shown falling on the ground. Banwari Lal, the patriarch of a cloth business middle class family in New Delhi, is a believer in the old ways. Men work out of home, women within. Men carry forward the family business, women enable their mission. His two sons unquestioningly follow their father in business and life, but their wives do not nor does his grand daughter. With unswerving attention, Kapur follows the members of this traditional family into the uneasy world they come to inhabit. From the frantic sensory overload of modern urban India, she constructs a story as intricate, quiet and dazzling as the fabric produced by the family. Told in a sustained colloquial voice, *Home* is startling in its sweep and unerringly accurate in the bleakness and hope it presents. An extensive investigative work, *Home* is a holistic venture to decipher characters of a family that to the world speak as one voice. Within the house each individual voice may chatter, murmur, question or complain, but they all must eventually fall silent in deference to the wishes of the family as a whole.

The Banwari Lals came to Delhi from Lahore. Surviving the partition has made Lala Banwari Lal all the more determined to succeed in the cloth business in his new country. Helped by his two sons, he ensures that the Banwari Lal Cloth Shop becomes one of the landmarks of Karol Bag. When his daughter turns 18, she is married to a boy in Bareilly. The family is not much upset when her husband turns out to be a drunkard — that is due to her *"bad karam"*

and she must live with it. Banwari Lal's son falls in love with a pretty customer from Meerut and has a "love marriage". The second son at 21 has a traditional arranged marriage, getting fridge, cooler, double bed, dining table, chairs and an upholstered sofa set in red velvet.

With one grandson's dowry, the family buys the flat above the shop, and with another they expand the family business. Life narrows constantly for the women. The sister, aged 32, has an accident in the kitchen and dies of burns in the hospital. The family suspects that the brother-in-law will use his son to enter their business, but respecting the patriarch's wishes grudgingly the child is allowed to stay in the family. Unfortunately the boy begins to molest his cousin. Dowry, death, molestation, abandonment are the features of this joint family. Kapur writes with insight and sharp irony. She has a delectable gift for some special Indian expressions: girls must be "married off" when they reach "marriageable age," the rich in-laws are "not at all proudy," and "higher studies" are only for "time pass." Nisha casually pursues B. A. (Honours) in English at a college, wasting a lot of time with her beau. Although the house is always full, every sensitive person becomes a study in isolation: the little son of the dead sister, abandoned by his drunkard father and unwanted by the joint family; the gentle elder brother, grieving over the fate of his daughter; and the daughter, unhappy in love and thwarted in ambition. Kapur is matchless in recording life within home, the claustrophobia and the chorus of family voices. Her books are centred around the lives of women and the complications of the family life. The novelist urges: "The family is where we live most of our lives. The politics of power, economic and social realties, what is permissible and what is not, all of these can be found within the family itself" (p.7).

The writer started writing this novel in 1994 and it would have been her first novel, had she not got stuck and moved on to *Difficult Daughter* instead. In one of the interviews she states, "I get both inspired and depressed. I wish I could write like that. Writing is a muscle that needs to be exercised all the time." The novel runs over 339 pages with 26 chapters, and has a charming jacket.

BASAVARAJ NAIKAR, *THE REBELLIOUS RANI OF BELAVADI AND OTHER STORIES*

(New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2006), pp.277, Rs.450.00

Rajendra Singh

In Basavaraj Naikar's second collection of short stories, *The Rebellious Rani of Belavadi and Other Stories,* the themes range from historical to contemporary and from religious to academic areas. Written with a pen dipped in realism, the reader is treated to verisimilitudes of life and real characters. Appealing with a freshness of surprise and suspense, they offer harsh and brutal surfaces in plenty, and meander through many moods — heroic, tragic and satiric. However, each story has its own flavour. All details are conjured with sensitivity, and the process of crisis and resolution is handled with skill.

Out of the twelve stories in this collection, three are remarkable for greater breadth and dimension, and hence well worth a look in detail. As for the historical theme of the title story, 'Rebellious Rani', had we not seen something similar before in his novel entitled *Sun under the Cloud*? If it captures the flavour of feminine heroism, it does not miss the feminine error of judgment. Her ill-formed policies contrasted with well-executed strategy are on display here alongwith her heroic foolhardiness. The story at a glance manifests the daring defiance of a queen against her own overlord, who is no less than the great Maratha ruler, Shivaji, because she cannot accept defeat from the challenge of a heroic battle. He is captured alive by the warrior-women of Rani Mallamma, who is a descendant of the Rastrakutta dynasty. Shivaji begs for his life and asks her forgiveness. She asks him to withdraw his armies and sign a treaty in her favour. The story highlights an irony of fate: when she is preparing to give him a welcome of honour, his soldiers come and attack her people.

In the second long story entitled 'Golden Servant', we come across another kind of heroism, which can be called spiritual, with all the biographical details of a well-known poet-saint of Karnataka called Kanakdasa. He turned religious early in life and started

singing and dancing before the deity. He composed verses in Kannada with great linguistic skill. But when his wife and son died, he had another spiritual transformation. However, he was not a sequestered hermit or a mere scholar. He had the courage to criticise the follies of his time. Standing firmly for a casteless society, he came in conflict with orthodox Brahmins. He did his best to stop animal sacrifices and other barbaric rituals in temples.

In his third long story, 'A Chronic Patient Became a Doctor', the author has drawn from his own experience, and the setting is academic for the unfolding of events in his life. Being an idealist, the protagonist is not satisfied with the result of M. A. English, as he fails to get a first division, while the duffers score more marks than they deserve. Disappointed, he decides to take an 'academic revenge' and joins the Department as a Research Assistant under his own Professor who is aptly named Nagraj in view of his evil mind. The guide does not help him to prepare his synopsis, and so he has to learn only by trial and error. When this neglect and indifference continues month after month and year after year, the researcher becomes restless and loses his sleep. When the thesis is submitted, the native examiner is very late in sending his report which asks him to revise his thesis. The Viva Voce test is held at Bombay, for which he has to borrow a big sum of money. At last, after a period of fourteen years, which is comparable to Rama's exile, the author, who calls himself a chronic patient, becomes a doctor; but the truth is that it is the Professor who is a chronic patient. In the end, armed with his Ph.D. degree and many other published papers, he appears in an interview for the Reader's post in his own University, but a lady, who is simply an M.A., is selected because she is a Minister's daughter and belongs to the Reservation category. The story points to the fact that the Universities in India have now become the playground of politicians.

To end, reality is the bed rock of these stories, but the author's language does not match his material and falls short of it in terms of similes and metaphors, which are absent alongwith other linguistic ornaments. Nevertheless, it is a pleasure to read these stories, most of which are marked by contemporaneity and modernity.

K.A. AGRAWAL, *INDIAN ENGLISH FICTION*

(Jaipur: Book Enclave, 2007), pp.292, Rs.795.00

M.S. Kushwaha

Though the book is an anthology of critical essays by divers hands, both the 'title-page' and the 'Table of Contents' give the impression that this is the work of a single author. While the title-page omits the word/s 'Editor' or 'Edited by', the Table of Contents does not include the names of contributors. The book seems to be deliberately designed to cheat the reader/ buyer into believing that this is a scholarly contribution of K.A. Agrawal, somewhat on the lines of M.K. Naik's *Twentieth Century Indian English Fiction.* At least this was my impression when I picked up the book. This is an unhealthy practice that needs to be discouraged.

Though the anthology bears an encyclopaedic title, it actually covers only an infinitesimal fraction of Indian English fiction. Only ten writers — Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande, Ruskin Bond, Shiv K. Kumar, Arun Joshi, Bharati Mukherjee and Arundhati Roy — are represented either by general assessments or essays on their works, or both as in the case of Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and Bhabani Bhattacharya. The essays on individual works cover *Kanthapura, The Serpent and the Rope, Untouchable, A Dream in Hawaii, A Handful of Rice, The Foreigner, The God of Small Things* and *Wife.*

Not only the 'new' Indian English novelists (excepting Arundhati Roy) but also the old stalwarts like R.K. Narayan and Anita Desai are conspicuous by their absence. One can understand the exclusion of the former, but the omission of the latter is really amazing. The inclusion of the Anglo-Indian novelist John Masters in the anthology is also anomalous.

The anthology may be of some use to the post-graduate students and young researchers working in the area of Indian English fiction (but not certainly at this prohibitive cost), but it is disappointing as a scholarly venture. It lacks both in conception and quality, despite the fact that the editor is a seasoned academic.

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