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SHAKESPEARE'S REPRESENTATION OF BOY CHARACTERS

S. Viswanathan

Boy actors constituted a significant section of the stage personnel in the theatrical companies of Shakespeare's time. Their being cast in women's roles in all-male theatre resource, which was hence inevitable then, has come in for a good deal of attention at the hands of theatre historians and drama critics. In an anecdote narrated by an English traveler in Italy at the time, who witnessed a play in an Italian theatre where women's roles were played by women actresses, the Englishman remarked that the women who acted the roles performed equally well as 'boy-character' (in Harley Granville-Barker's phrase) did back home. So the boys' enactment was so good that it supplied the standard of judgment. The boys played all the roles including adult male and female ones in the court theatre of Lyly and Peele. The children of the Chapel Royal played in these. Their acting and their role have received critical attention.

When the boy companies came to perform in commercial theatre beginning with the turn of the century, they soon grew to be a professional challenge to and theatrical influence on the flourishing adult companies. The boys' acting, and the orientation of the plays of the boy companies have come under critical analysis. The view developed that mimicking attitudes and poses of adults and their mouthing in their piping voices of rhetoric had an effect of parody. More, the self-conscious exposure in these plays of the mechanics of stage presentation and impersonation evoked an effect of self-reflexivity and a new accentuation or inflection of the theatrical self-consciousness inherent in the Elizabethan dramatic tradition, with deliberateness. There have been some demurrers who hold that such effects were not intended by the playwrights like John Marston who wrote exclusively for the boy companies and that the boys were simply playing straight, but this is a minority view. Ben Jonson who wrote for the boy companies also wrote an elegy on the prematurely dead boy actor. Solomon Pavey who was an expert spe-

cialist in old men's roles. Amid all these, boy characters proper do occur occasionally in Shakespeare and these must have been enacted by the boy actors in the company. Their role and its significance has not received specific attention in studies so far. Shakespeare's company seems to have had at least two boy actors for casting in these roles. In a number of Shakespeare's plays boys appear as pages to adult men. But in about five or six plays boy characters as boy characters appear in one or a few scenes and perform roles of some real interest and significance. Shakespeare's conception and presentation of such boy characters offers telling glimpses into the total effect of the plays and contribute to their dramatic art. We may now take a look at this feature of the plays. Such characters as may claim attention are young Lucius in *Titus Andronicus*, Prince Arthur in *King John*, Brutus's page Lucius in *Julius Caesar*, William the schoolboy in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, young Macduff in *Macbeth*, Coriolanus's son in *Coriolanus* and Leontes's son Mamilius in *A Winter's Tale*.

We may begin with the three Roman boys young Lucius, Titus's grandson, plays a crucial part in *Titus Andronicus* in 4.1. and the succeeding scene. In the speech headings he is referred to generically as 'Boy'. It is the boy's reading of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and particularly the tale of Philomel and her rape by Tereus, and Lavinia's chance coming upon him while he reads that helps her to make the for long undiscloseable revelation that she was raped and mutilated. She frantically runs after the boy as he flees from her frightened by her gestures of anger and joy about a new mean of disclosure which was otherwise impossible for her to bring about Titus and his son Marcus who intercepts them are able to discover the meaning of Lavinia's reaction to the role of Philomel in Ovid. Marcus hits upon a plan of making Lavinia communicate the names of the perpetrators of the hideous crime. He demonstrates how to write the names on sand with a stick held between the lips and guided by the digits of the foot in her tongue-less and handless state. The names are writ large on sand by Lavinia of Aaron, Chiron and Demetrius. The most interesting part of it is that the boy is able to absorb the meaning and implications of rape, as he himself puts it, 'like a man'. Capping

all is his angry outburst almost vowing revenge

> I say, my lord, if I were a man,
> Their mother's bed chambers should not be safe
> For these bondmen to the yoke of Rome. (*Titus Andronicus*, 4.1. 106-108)

It is very much an adult response. It is partly due to the playwright making the child precocious in the interests of dramatic impact. But it is more due to the conception of boys and childhood then current in Shakespeare's time. Shakespeare's depiction of this and other boys shows that not only authors but people in general viewed children as little else than miniature adults. There was insufficient understanding or recognition of childhood as childhood or of the workings of the child mind. After all, there were hardly any specific children's dresses and they were clothed like little adults.

In 4.2 young Lucius performs with aplomb his role as Titus's ambassador to the court, to the sons of the Emperor, the villainous young princes, Chiron and Demetrius. The boy actor must have commanded considerable skills of voice modulation and quick alternations of modes of address and utterance. He shifts with ease from direct speech to soliloquy-like aside and back almost in the same breath. He speaks like an adult, again.

The other Lucius in *Julius Caesar* plays the role of an attending page to Brutus who serves with a sense of duty and devotion. His sense of loyal service and his readiness to serve Brutus any time of day or night forgoing sleep make him a true Roman. He is Brutus's ever vigilant valet. He acts as the usher when the conspirators come to meet Brutus at dead of night. His response to Portia in the last scene of act 2 when she besides herself in her agitation and anxiety about what Brutus might do in the Capitol and be in for in the senate meeting asks the boy to run forthwith to the Capitol and return to her. Lucius quietly stands his ground in cool commonsense and asks Portia

> Madam, what should I do?
> Run to the Capitol, and nothing else?
> And so return to you, and nothing else? (*Julius Caesar*, 2.4. 30-32)

In the quarrel scene, that of the confrontation of Brutus and Cassius, Lucius is a quiet presence in Brutus's tent. He accompanies Brutus on his wars and stays with him. He is clear-minded and

points out to Brutus who absent-mindedly asks him for a book he gave him that Brutus never gave it. He obliges Brutus by playing his music instrument in spite of being overcome by sleep deep into the night. When Brutus wakes up others sleeping in his tent after his encounter with Caesar's ghost, Lucius reacts with considerable collectedness and Brutus shows understanding and solicitude towards his page bidding him to go back to sleep. What Lucius mutters immediately after waking up, thinking, as Brutus readily understands, he is still at his music instrument, "The notes are false" turns out to be a meaningful metaphor from music. Shakespeare's was a period when the idea of musical harmony as a principle of the universe and its goings on was current and carried many-levelled implications. The idea of disharmony and the disorder and even disaster it may signify gets broached through Lucius's casual image which crystallizes in itself the meaning of the tragedy that the play is.

Coriolanus's son, the very young Marcius, is the third Roman boy to appear in the plays. He is not given a name in the play — we hear about him first in the domestic scene in this political play (1.3), by an elaborate report given by the visiting Roman lady Valeria to the Marcius household. Virgilia, Coriolanus's wife, is bemoaning the absence of her husband. Volumnia is the typical Roman warrior's mother with pride in son Coriolanus's martial exploits and his name and fame. Her son had shown his preference for the casque over the cushion right from his childhood. As Volumnia and Virgilia sit sewing when Valeria arrives, Volumnia gently expresses her disapproval of Virgilia's moping and moaning about Coriolanus's absence and her withdrawing herself into the house refusing to cross the threshold till her husband is back home. Valeria's elaborate account of her watching the child at play is revealing and interesting. The boy runs after a gilded butterfly and as it flies away from him he catches it but deliberately lets it go to tease it and only to catch it again and repeat the operation many times over. He finally castles it, and after the long cat-and-mouse game tears it to pieces gritting his teeth and his entire countenance in anger. As Valeria puts it, 'how he mammocked it'. It shows that the boy is quite a chip of the old block. Coriolanus has been called 'a slaying machine'

though he is not merely that. But the episode is essentially that of a childish prank and mostly a childlike play, abandon, and indulgence in it for enjoyment and for the expenditure and release of bubbling energies. The streak of cruelty and lack of feeling is concomitant of it and secondary to the element of sheer play. The domestic scene where it is reported is a contrastive variation on the political and war preoccupations of the play as a whole. The contrast appears ultimately to produce a baroque effect. The apparent quiet of domesticity not only coexists with violence erupting into it, what with the warrior son's banishment, his would-be invasion of his own cherished Rome 'and his pathetic end in the hands of the Volscians.

The boy plays his part in the grand, awful ensemble scene towards the end where Volumnia arrives leading her whole family and the citizen leaders of Rome at the gates of the city, in order to stop Coriolanus from running over the city with the Volscian army he comes leading. The little boy makes one in the kneeling party and their frantic appeals delivered by Volumnia, to Coriolanus to stop short in his course. But the boy a stage presence as he is in the scene is given only one speech, and it is eloquent in the metaphorical sense.

Boy : An shall not tread on me;
I shall run away till I am bigger but then I'll fight
(*Coriolanus*, 5.2. 128-129)

The response of the boy which shows his discretion as well as valour claims attention in another respect. The motif of the lurid action of treading over somebody's body is one of those subtle links that help the tonal movement of the play. The boy invokes an idea which looks before and after in the play. Volumnia broaches it first in 1.3. in her envisionment of her son's heroic exploit in Corioli against all odds. As we get to know later in that very scene, she has already had reports of the proud deeds of her son against his arch enemy Aufidius the Volscian. In Volumnia's imagination she envisions her son's triumphal treading over Aufidius's body

Volumnia : He'll beat Aufidius head below his knee
And tread upon his neck. (1.3. 50-51)

In the confrontation scene, just before the boy speaks, Volumnia warns Coriolanus as a capping utterance in the long series of her appeals to him

> ... thou shalt no sooner than to tread
> March to assault thy country—
> Trust to it, thou shalt not—on thy mother's womb.

This warning is the last straw that breaks the camel's back, and Coriolanus is too deeply moved, given his love of his mother, not to yield. The boy takes the cue from Volumnia's words. But these references ominously foreshadow the gruesome reality that happens at the play's end, the spectacle of tragic pathos of Aufidius treading on Coriolanus's dead body after getting him killed treacherously and in cold blood. The play abounds in such implanted references to body parts, both covert and overt references. These references have their centre in that widely current Elizabethan *topos* of the tongue and the heart, often suggesting the idea of a divorce between the two which Richard Mulcaster bemoaned in his *The Schoolmaster.* The rhetorical commonplace appears in its variant forms—heart and hand, head and knee, neck and foot, for example prominently in this play and occasional references are used in such a way that the play is more metonymic than metaphorical in its orientation. They serve as unifying factors in the structure and movement of the play. The uncanny use of the reference of treading upon one's neck is a striking example. The presence of the little boy in this adult play contributes its own intrinsic interest and also to the architectonic of the play, at the same time.

Now for the two boy princes in Shakespeare—Prince Arthur in *Kind John* and Mamiluis, Leontes's only son in *A Winter's Tale.* Both are star-crossed boy princes who die very young though in different ways. In his first appearance in the play in his very first speech Arthur bemoans his condition and stands weeping as he finds himself an object of contention between King John and his mother and mother-in-law of Arthur's mother Constance. Constance keeps her son in her custody in the French court in order to protect Arthur from coming to harm at the hands of King John. Since Arthur has a prior right over the kingdom of England and a surer one than

that of King John. King John's contrivance is to take Arthur into his custody and find subterfuges by which he could be eliminated. That is what happens eventually though Arthur's death is not directly brought about by King John's machinations but by other means. Arthur's first speech has an ominous ring. His sense of his ill-fadedness emerges in the words as a foreboding.

Arthur : Good my mother, peace!
I would I were low-laid in my grave,
I am not worth the coil that's made for me.(*King John*, 2.1. 163-165)

He shows an adult awareness of the implications of his plight and of the struggles he has to face. We see him next in 4.1., the blinding of Arthur scene minus the blinding. Arthur has to encounter Hubert, confidant of King John, who has been acting as the caretaker of the boy and who now comes ready equipped to carry out the blinding at King John's instance. Through his adroit and at the same time sincere pleadings Arthur is able to avert the event and Hubert is so deeply moved as to give up the whole idea. The scene in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries was a popularly prescribed lesson in high school English and was often enacted by pupils, on occasions. Arthur is the star performer who steals the show through his eloquence and turning away of the wrath of his opponents. He disarms Hubert through his words in a subtle but guileless manner, by stages. Through an apt choice of modes of persuasion and uncanny timing of his arguments he is able to touch the right chord in Hubert's heart at the right time. He starts off with kind enquiries about Hubert's state of health with genuine concern. He reminds him of how he nursed Hubert when he was down with a severe headache. He at that time sat by his bedside late into the night nursing him and binding his head with an embroidered handkerchief which princesses had woven for Arthur. Arthur never asked it back again. Hubert thus had a prince attending on him when he was sick. He manages to persuade Hubert to send away his accomplices who bring the red hot irons for the act. Arthur then starts arguing that the accomplices who indeed expressed obvious relief that they did not have to perform the nefarious deed are kinder than Hubert. So is the iron itself which has cooled down out of pity for

Arthur for all its being all iron. Hubert's conscience is touched and he relents and declares his abandonment of the idea of doing Arthur harm.

We next see Arthur when he performs his fatal leap from his castle window in a desperate attempt to escape the tender mercies of King John and from his long incarceration in the castle which results in the numbing of his instinct of self-preservation. The death wish he expresses on his first appearance takes full hold of him. He leaps hoping to die on the flinty ground deep below or by chance escape. He falls dead. His dead body remains onstage for the rest of the whole scene 4. The dead Arthur becomes the object of dispute between the revolting barons and Hubert who arrives on the scene as also the Bastard Falconbridge who is there on his own. Hubert swears his innocence while the barons believe that Hubert must have killed the boy, as the king's man. After the barons leave seething with anger and thoughts of revenge to go over to France and help the French king to invade England, Hubert picks up the body of Arthur and the Bastard meaningfully remarks, 'how easily he takes up all England in his hands'. The Bastard uses the idea of the 'King's Two Bodies', the 'Body natural' and the 'Body political'. He believes that Arthur would have been the legitimate King of England, not John, for all his loyalty to John. The Bastard also foresees that the event would lead to the violence of civil war and chaos, thereby hinting at the course of the later history plays dealing with the Wars of the Roses.

The other unfortunate boy prince in the plays is Mamilius, and he figures first in 1.2 the crucial scene where he becomes the object of attention of his father King Leontes exactly at the moment of the onset of his inexplicable jealousy towards his loyal queen Hermione as she takes Polixenes the visiting king of Bohemia to persuade him at the instance of Leontes to extend his stay. Leontes starts doubting the close resemblance between him and his son, much remarked upon by everyone. They have look-alike noses Leontes fixes his attention on the boy's nose offering to clean it. He gives the child a lesson in personal hygiene. The pert boy takes it all in good spirit, not knowing what his father is driving at. The lesson

also becomes a little lecture on the semantics of the word 'neat' with its original Anglo-Saxon sense of 'cattle' and its later meaning of 'cleanly'.

The boy shows his individuality when he is fondled by his two nurses. Curiously, he prefers the Second Nurse for her black hair and eyes. There seems to have been a bias on Shakespeare's part in favour of black which finds expression in *Love's Labour's Lost* and the Dark Lady Sonnets and his treatment of characters with a touch of black except for Aaron the moor an obvious villain. The way he starts his story-telling to his mother of 'a sad tale for a winter's eve' is interesting but the story turn out to be a true story, though it all ultimately ends well, a sad tale indeed. Mother and son are rudely interrupted as Leontes barges in with his Lords. He orders the summary banishment of Hermione from the court and plucks the child Mamilius apart from his mother. The tenderness of the scene is swamped by the disastrous development. The result is that the boy pines away in his separation and dies. The news of his sole son and heir's death reaches Leontes precisely at the moment at which the message of the oracle at Delphi arrives. The oracle establishes the chastity of Hermione and declares that Leontes will die without an heir if 'the lost be not found'. That sparks off Leontes's long repentance for sixteen years.

The short-lived fate overtakes also Macduff's child in *Macbeth* in the scene in which the boy is in a different kind confabulation with his mother lady Macduff. The boy within himself is sure that Macduff has not run away from them of his choice, much less is he dead. But Lady Macduff fears that Macduff has deserted them and he is perhaps dead. When she asks the child, who tells her for fun that she look for a new husband, what the child would do for a living as he has no father to take care of him, the boy boldly answers that he would live free as a bird does. Lady Macduff points out that birds run the risk of being caught in snares. This is an expression of an idea characteristic of Shakespeare's inclusive perspective which sees the other side to an idyllic picture. It is also a criticism of the conventional phrase 'free as a bird'. The boy stands up to the ruffians who come to kill them all mercilessly. The boy's and the

mother's attempt to escape are in vain as they are pursued and massacred.

We have the singing boy Balthazar in *Much Ado about Nothing* who provides occasional instrumental music and vocal articulation. His remark (3.1) calling attention to the notes he is going to produce where the word 'notes' gets iterated several times though meant apparently to be a little ado about the notes he is to strike and a message that his listeners should pay attention to the notes, has its oblique reference to the title of the play and to the homonymic pun in Elizabethan English of 'nothing' and 'noting' which were pronounced alike and the meaning 'to overhear' which the word 'note' carried then among its other meanings. The play's movement hinges on several incidents of 'overhearing'.

In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, the son of Page, significantly first-names William goes through a catechism in Latin accidence held by his Welsh schoolmaster Sir Hugh Evans (4.1). He proves a ready and apt enough pupil, and the comic side to the scene is presented by Mrs. Quickly who observes it. All but illiterate, she expresses shock at the Latin words and sees obscenity in them taking them to be English. William boldly sets right his master when he with his Welsh mannerism pronounces the 'v' in 'vocative' as 'f'. As Falstaff says towards the end of the play, the schoolmaster makes fritters of the Queen's English. Shakespeare perhaps takes a dig at the excess of attention to Latin to the neglect of English at the time. Perhaps he remembers a bit of his experience as a local grammar school boy at Stratford.

Richard III's page, for all his boyish state, is able to identify a ruffian (4.2. 36-37) who could kill the child princes in the Tower at the King's bidding. The boy is able immediately to spot a malcontent named Tyrell who would readily do it for gold.

A prominent feature of the more important and sustained boy characters such as Prince Arthur, Macduff's son and Mamilius is that they all die very young in pitiable circumstances. Most of the rest of the boys are dogged by misfortune. Behind this tread, we could perhaps find the prevalence then of childhood and boyhood mortality, and also perhaps the early passing away of Shakespeare's

boy children including Hamnet's in 1596. The question arises why Shakespeare has not young girl characters of the same age group as his boys. It need not be put down to any discrimination against the girl child on his part. He was fond of his daughters, who were his only heirs. The exigencies of the stage, the boy actors having to take care of adult women roles (though often they slipped into male roles assuming disguise) were factors behind the absence of girl characters corresponding to the boy characters. Shakespeare's conception and presentation of his boy characters is an interesting aspect of the artistic design and impact of the plays and their stage life.

THE LYRE WITHOUT STRINGS: CHANGING CODES OF ACCEPTANCE IN POSTMODERN AMERICAN CRITICAL PARLANCE

K.B. Razdan

Postmodernist literary problematics has made it imperative that the axial-lines of interpretation and understanding related to the modern and postmodern American critical typology be gauged in proper perspectives. Such an exigency has become highly relevant and contextually applicable to literary texts, fiction, poetry and drama written in the United States from the late 1960's onwards. Two gigantic figures, Ihab Hassan and Northrop Frye, in the last quarter of the previous century, assumed an extremely unavoidable status as philosophic-cum-scientific critics laying bare the most intricate and inaccessible parameters of postmodern literary textuality. Ihab Hassan can justifiably be labeled as the Plato of modern and postmodern critical theory vis-à-vis a revelatory approach to the contemporary American novel. Hassan's critical theory on 'Postmodern Culture and Literary Aesthetics' has been well argued in his thought-provoking works like *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* and *Modernism in the Plural: Challenges and Perspectives*, containing the highly stimulating exegesis called "The Culture of Postmodernism."

If Ihab Hassan can be called as the Plato of American postmodern literary problematics, then Northrop Frye easily qualifies as the Aristotle of American Literary Theory. Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*, creditably can earn the title of present day *Poetics*, highly relevant and applicable to modern and postmodern texts and textuality. Aristotelian logic and critical parlance, as embodied in the *Poetics*, holds no relevance as textuality transcends the author himself. It is in this context that postmodern critics dealing with literary theory have used such expressions as the death of the author and the beginning of the text. The main problem comes in the form of a hybridized conceptualization, writers of postmodern texts revel in. What exactly these writers do is to present to the reader a spectroscopic narrative compendium based upon the reality of

Postmodern Man and his existential tribulations. These texts throw ample light upon the ironical self-reflexivity in which an absurdist and lost human self attempts to take the "bull by the horns". Such an attempt spills over and gets percolated as the Sisyphan essence of the American postmodern hero, particularly the novelistic one. This hero comes pretty close to us in real life because his existential tribulations are akin to our real life experiences.

Be it fiction, poetry or drama, texts written in these genres during the last thirty years of the previous century, mostly indulge in what has been called as "The politics of parody", "Text/image border tension", besides the relationship between postmodernism and feminism, which also comes under scrutiny. An avid and inquisitive scholar, wedded to unsetting textuality, cannot afford to overlook or ignore what has been termed as "Theorising", "Modelling", "Limiting", "Decentering", "Contextualizing", and "Historicising" the postmodern. The hybridized-cum-fabulatory constructions, employed in intricate knotty textuality, usually incorporate an innovative "conceptual universe."[1] Frye's phenomenal work *Anatomy of Criticism,* besides works like *Fables of Identity* and *Fools of Time,* make Frye a milching cow, a scientific critic with an immense critical potential. In *Fables of Identity,* Frye seems very keen to specify the exact relationship between criticism and the main body of literature. With his synthetic and purely scientific insights, Frye treats a number of specific works and makes it clear that criticism, by no conceivable means, can be labeled as a "subdivision of literature."[2] Frye's individualistic and scientific approach raises a controversial idea, the crux of which comes as a startling revelation: his observation that apart from some aspect of criticism, literature is not a subject of study at all. What Frye exactly implies, in an expansive context, is that literature is in reality an "object", implying thereby that it can neither be understood nor taught unless criticism develops its own autonomous principles.

As already stated, it is this conceptual universe Frye sets out to construct in the "Polemical Introduction" to the *Anatomy of Criticism.* He gives his reasons for believing that "a synoptic view of the scope, theory, principles and techniques of literary criticism"[3] is not

only possible but necessary as well. Ostensibly, Frye's major assumption focuses upon the existence of a unified structure of knowledge about literature which criticism should progressively and systematically evolve. A significant statement comes in these words "Critical principles cannot be taken over ready-made from theology, philosophy, politics, science or any combination of these" (7). If such a thing happens, the result comes in the form of what Frye calls the "fallacy of determinism" (7). Frye's polemic against deterministic attitudes and approaches toward works of art is quite appropriate and he rightly advocates that what is needed is:"an examination of literature in terms of a conceptual framework derivable from an inductive survey of the literary field" (7). Here it becomes necessary to make a brief reference to Frye's opinion on "Value Judgments."

In *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye distinguishes between what he calls "comparative and positive value judgments" (20). Comparative judgements, according to him, either become biographical evaluations: "which view a literary work as a product, and tropical evaluations, which view the work as possession" (20-21). Positive evaluations, on the contrary, "treat the goodness or genuineness of a poem, and because they derive in part from one's direct experience of literature rather than from an extra- literary prejudice...Positive values... born of informal good taste" (27). "Informal good taste" is based upon both experience and knowledge. As borne out by Frye's own critical works, good taste follows and is developed by the study of literature. All the same, everything depends on value judgments and of course, the intrinsic relationship between literature and life along with the question of "Literary Autonomy". These path-breaking works have proved highly helpful in approaching problematized and hybridized postmodern texts. Such texts usually employ, what is termed as innovation/renovation, creation/recreation, in short centering on: "the enigmas of literary change."[4]

The very first essay in *Anatomy is* titled as "Theory of Modes: Fictional Modes, Tragic Fictional Modes, Comic Fictional Modes, and Thematic Modes." What become most interesting in Frye's own brief introduction to his "Theory of Modes," are two terms which he

ities from Aristotle but applies these in a modern fabulatory manner: *Spoudaios* and *Phaulos*. Both these terms Frye interprets and applies to literary fictions to imply "a figurative sense of weighty and light" (33). What becomes most irresistible and fascinating about Frye in the "Theory of Modes" is his diagnostic delineation of the fictional hero's personality and power of action which earns him a specific kind of status: the hero of *myth*, mostly a story about a god "outside the normal literary categories" (33). In case the hero looks superior in degree to other humans as well as to his environment, he becomes a typical hero of *romance*. Such a hero moves away from myth and enters the realms of legends, folk tales or else *marchen*. In case the hero qualifies to be superior in degree to other men but not to his natural environment, he attains a status of a great leader, endowed with passion, authority, powers of expression far beyond those of ours. The actions of such a hero get classified as belonging to the *high mimetic*. Naturally, this hero becomes a hero of epic and tragedy, exactly the hero that Aristotle talks about in his *Poetics*. Next kind of hero, Frye delineates, is the one who is neither superior to other men nor to his environment. He is simply one of us. Last but not the least, if the hero is "inferior in power or intelligence to ourselves..." (34), what the reader gets is simply a spectacle "of bondage, frustration or absurdity..."(34). This hero belongs, to the Ironic fictional mode.

In the tragic, comic and thematic fictional modes, Frye goes on to explain the heroes of divine status (tragic modes) including high mimetic and low mimetic tragedy. The theme of the comic fictional mode, according to Frye, "is the integration of society, which usually takes the form of incorporating a central character into it" (43). Regarding thematic modes, Frye speaks about poetry "as completely absorbed in its internal characters as it is in Shakespeare or in Homer, where the poet himself simply points to his story and disappears ..."(52). In this connection, Frye aptly uses the *dianoia*, because such fictions, with dominant thematic interests, possess "elements of discovery just as plots do" (52). All the same, it is the third essay titled "Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths" which assumes maximum importance because the kind of literature which

has been written in the last quarter of the previous century and right up till now. The "Theory of Archetypal Meaning" divides into two sub-categories: "Apocalyptic Imagery and Demonic Imagery". Frye uses the word apocalyptic in the Divine sense and identifies five worlds within the format of "Apocalyptic Imagery"— The Divine, The Human, The Animal, The Vegetable and the Mineral.

In the Apocalyptic Divine world, we have the God of *Genesis* as the benevolent, caring and concerned Supreme Father of all mankind. In Demonic Imagery, the same God becomes virtually absent or else a highly indifferent, callous and presumptuous god who cannot tolerate man's defiance and punishes him heavily. It is this god we get in the fictional cosmos of *Moby Dick*. Frye's demonic imagery presents the hell man creates on earth. Very rightly, such a society is defined by Frye as "an endless course of tragic dilemmas like those of Hamlet and Antigone."(148). In the demonic human world, marriage gets replaced by incest, homosexuality, lesbianism, hermophroditism. The wife gets replaced by the *Haetara*, meaning an enchantress, who ensnares man and spells his doom.

In the demonic animal world, the central figure of the lamb, who is none else than Jesus, gets replaced by the sinister animals of prey, the tiger, the wolf, the dragon, the serpent. The Garden of Eden which features prominently in the Apocalyptic Vegetable World, gets replaced by the sinister or the magical forest, the wild health, or the dangerous moor. Such a demonic vegetable world gets represented by the forest in Hardy's *Tess*, in which Tess gets raped, or else Egdon Heath in *The Return of the Native*. The apocalyptic mineral world which features the City, the City of Jerusalem, the birthplace of Jesus Christ, gets replaced by the wasteland, the abyss or else "tortured wrackes", "pillories", "guillotines", "twigs", etc.

The third essay "Theory of Myths" contains "Theory of Mythos", as well. The Greek word "Mythoi", implying phases, usually connected with cycles, comes in the singular form as "Mythos". Consequently, Frye labels his Mythos theory according to four cycles of Nature: the Mythos of Spring (Comedy); the Mythos of Summer (Romance); the Mythos of Autumn (Tragedy); and finally the Mythos of Winter (Irony and Satire). No work of literature, ever written across

the world, can go beyond the ambit of these four mythoi.

Like the "Polemical introduction" to *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye also gives, for the benefit of readers, a "Tentative Conclusion" only to convey the impression that his idea of critical autonomy or autonomous criticism is an open-ended proposition, a blank-cheque, a continuously evolving science. Like the varied branches of scientific investigation and research, be it mathematics, or the verbal universes, there are always "doubtless different ways of conceiving the same universe" (354). At the end of *Anatomy of Criticism*, he cites the instance of *Finnegan's Wake*. In this monumental work of fiction, the central protagonist experiences a dream and as a dreamer spends an entire night in communion with a vast body of metaphorical identifications, wakens and goes about his business forgetting his dream, like Nebuchadnezzar, failing to use, or even to realize that he can use "the keys to dreamland" (354).

For even a dedicated scholar, it becomes pretty difficult to understand the existential tribulations of postmodern man and the postmodern novelistic hero, especially the highly ironical quantum of self-reflexivity, the disturbingly absurdist essence of the late modern and postmodern American fictional hero, a person difficult to negotiate. All this gets commendably decoded and made transparent by Ihab Hassan in his two critical works, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus* and "Culture of Postmodernism", an excerpt from *Modernism in the Plural: Challenges and Perspectives*. Hassan makes an irresistible, a highly relevant maxim when he says that the modern Orpheus sings on a lyre without strings and "he is surely no monster of hubris."[5] The cardinal crime of Orpheus, when he looked back and again consigned Eurydice to Hades, is still being committed. Its fictional correlative comes in the form of postmodern American novelistic hero, who within the fictional cosmos of his creator's work, perpetually sends back Eurydice to Hades. In this context, Camus's words ring prophetic when he proclaims: "Only the sacrifice of an innocent god could justify the endless and universal torture of innocence."[6] Paradoxically enough, the number of "innocent gods" getting sacrificed at the altar of unredeemed innocence, in fictional as well as real life, goes on ever-increasing. The

Grapes of Tantalus, the Rock of Prometheus, the Wheel of Ixion and the Globe of Atlas, have become chronic spectacles in our present day world, not to talk of the contemporary American novelistic heroes. Hassan's multi-teired observations regarding the Orpheus metaphor links the reader to such movements as Cubism, Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism, etc.

The dismemberment of Orpheus and his song on the stringless lyre creates the music of "silence". This silence invades all forms of speech and renders language irrelevant. Even the Song and the Wisdom of Solomon cannot be of any help when the deluge of silence totally inundates the mind and the psyche of contemporary man. Each ripple of this silence exhibits our own contours of failed communication and a galaxy of meanings, alongwith the whirlpools of our thought. That's why, precisely, the silence of Orpheus's lyre without strings has now become our own silence. It employs alienation from reason, from society, and from history, besides an unnerving reduction of all engagements and interests in the creative world of humans. Unfortunately, these days, the silence emanating from the sterile lyre of Orpheus also betrays not only a separation from nature, but also a perversion of vital and erotic processes. In the same context, Ihab Hassan says very aptly: "the symptoms range from misogamy to necrophilia. Man rejects the earth and abhors woman, he detaches himself from the body" (*DO* 13).

The innovative and ironic deconstruction of the mythic Orpheus comes in the form of contemporary man's identity and his fictional alter-ego, both singing on a "Lyre without Strings". It becomes Hassan's way of projecting the meaningless, absurd and consumerist essence of the human self, as portrayed in the American novel, written from 1970 onwards. This extremely thought-provoking and challenging concept in context of the apocalyptic and surrealist existential dismantling of the American hero, gets further dealt with in remaining chapters of The *Dismemberment of Orpheus*, when Hassan individually deals with writers like Marquis de Sade, Ernest Hemingway, Franz Kafka, Genet and Beckett.

The ideas, expressed in *"The Culture of Postmodernism,"* came during an International Conference in India in the year 1985. Later

on, along with wife, Sally Hassan, he wrote another work *Innovation/ Renovation: New Perspectives on the Humanities* (London: University of Visconsin Press, 1983). Both these works paved the way for a detailed exegesis on the culture of postmodernism, wherein Hassan coheres and collates his ideas as "the enigmas of literary change" (*CPM* 2). It is the word "change" which Hassan links to history itself and finally to literary changes, among which postmodernism as a literary phenomenon became inevitable and a hard reality. Death is the final change of all changes by which "the body refuses its long intimacy with the will, giving itself to emptiness. The event is visible, irrevocable, mysterious" (2). Hassan makes an interesting observation when he points out that humans went on living for a millennia "without conscious knowledge of their death..."(2). What exactly the preceding premise connotes is that usually, as a psychological impoverishment, men generally avoid the idea of death out of sheer fear.

By giving these instances, Hassan actually lays the justifying foundation for explaining the phenomenon called "Postmodernism", the rampant culture it germinates by invading all areas of human life and living. As an unwelcome, obtrusive and disturbing change, postmodernism came to be labeled as a myth, something non-existent till, as Hassan himself agrees, it had to be accepted as a hard reality. When postmodernism came to be accepted finally as an inevitable reality, what had already happened was that culture was getting totally obliterated by deculture and continuity being eroded by discontinuity. Using highly self-coined aggressive terms, Hassan eulogizes the postmodernist avalanche as: "Innovation/renovation, Creation/recreation: such terms conspire deeply against our quotidian being" (3).

Change and difference, the first disjunctive, naturally fills all the gaps in the form of "abstract narratives or metalanguages" (*CPM* 3). Difference may not be that disturbing, as the quantum of change involved does not exactly "perceive the new" (3). To further expound his brilliant preamble to the invasion called postmodernism, Hassan says: "the discontinuous vision invokes perpetual rebirth, the phoenix rising from its ashes: while the vision of continuity yearns for

retrospective immortality ..." (3). Ihab Hassan's argumentative vocabulary becomes pretty tough for most of us to understand. Death, as the apotheosis of change, becomes an existential metaphor, an ontology of the new or simply politics of innovation. That's why Hassan rightly says "death enters the very languages by which we try to understand change" (4). Postmodernism, as a socio-cultural invasion, topsy-turvied everything and deconstructed the continuous into the discontinuous. History itself becomes both continuous and discontinuous. As a historical truth, "rejection or denial of postmodernism" (*CPM* 8) would simply amount to adopting an ostrich-attitude to what started happening to the structures of literary texts and the sensibilities of writers from the middle of 1970's decade of the last century right upto the beginning of the present millennium.

A very illustrative, irresistible, gripping chart of distinction, Hassan himself gives in "The Culture of Postmodernism" to bring out head-to-head dichotomy between modernism and postmodernism. For example, expressions like "Play", "Chance", "Anarchy", "Exhaustion/Silence", "Participation", "Decreation / Deconstruction / Antithesis", "Dispersal", "Text/Intertext", "Metonymy", "Signifier", "Desire", "Schizophrenia", "Irony", "Indeterminacy", all these form the universe of existential digitality, a world of metaphor and metonymy determining the Identity, the Self, the Being and the Persona of the American literary hero. It's the same hero who inhabits the textual cosmos of the literary works written in the United States during the last two decades of the twentieth century.

The perpetual tension between self and society, in the late modern and postmodern American novel, constitutes a recurrent problem for the heroes of such a novel. Ihab Hassan rightly says that an awareness of this kind of tension gets "colored" by three defining parameters which get applied "with unequal success" (329). These parameters, constituting the algebra of stress for the hero, are "the new ethos of mass society, the concept of manners and the idea of romance" (329). Writers of such novels, from the late 1960's to the end of the twentieth century, depict one obsessive trait: the alienation of the self from society. This is the fundamental

dictum of the postmodern American novel.

As a climatic orientation it would be pertinent to specify some American novelistic heroes as the unforgettable paradigms of whatever I have been saying earlier. It was Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-five* based upon his horrible experience during the Second World War, which produced the first such American hero in the form of Billy Pilgrim. No doubt, much earlier, Nathanael West in the late 1930's produced heroes like Balso-Snell, Miss Lonelyhearts, Lemuel Pitkin, and Todd Hackett, who become the virtual ancestors of the present-day American hero. It is the comic grotesquerie, bizarre emptiness and the apocalyptic stance which constitute the role-playing matrix of these novelistic personages. After Billy Pilgrim, we have Vonnegut's Dwayne Hoover in *Breakfast of Champions* and Rabo Karabekian in *Bluebeard*, who epitomise such a kind of orientation. The heroes of Jerzy Kosinski's novels like *The Devil Tree, Cockpit, Blind Date, Passion Play and Pinball,* make violence, disguise, music and sexual orgies as their unavoidable compulsions and addictions. Heroes like Tarden, Levanter, Fabian and Goddard alias James Osten and Patrick Domostroy, all become existential vagabonds, wanderers, metafictional picaros-cum-nomads, adventurers, and finally pilgrims. Joseph Heller's protagonists like Bob Slocum in *Something Happened*, Bruce Gold in *Good as Gold*, and the earlier, immortal Yossarian in *Catch-22* form another category of American heroes who grapple with various sociological factors and reflect a paradigm shift from naturalism to explore the subterranean aspect of consciousness in order to delineate the burden and the ambivalence of personal responsibility and accountability in a world and a society which accommodate evil with dexterous ease.

Be it the protagonists of Kosinski, Vonnegut, Updike, Heller or Burroughs, what the reader gets is a chronic central problem at the very core of a dehumanized life. The problem gets identified as "the dysjunction between man's ideal conceptualizations and his mortal conditions."[7] An almost challenging brand of postmodernist determinism shapes, guides and directs these heroes with their every act, event, and decision as the inevitable consequence of antecedents, such as physical, psychological or environmental It is particu-

larly the novelistic heroes of Joseph Heller, Jerzy Kosinski and Kurt Vonnegut who get simply stuck in the quagmires of absurdity and meaninglessness of human effort, in fact of human existence itself.

Ihab Hassan has very correctly observed that the contemporary American hero: "is a religious symbol without religion, a mythic image without benefit of a myth, a figure transcendent by virtue of its nakedness rather than its communal authority" (327). To put very succinctly, for such a hero, the essence of his Self and the essence of the world in which he lives, are not one and the same. The fractured and broken pattern of this hero's action "recalls the futile courage of a Sisyphus toiling to unite one pole of experience to the other" (*PFE* 327). The defining elements of the Greek *alazon*—the imposter, compulsive rebel, or outsider and his antithetical opposite, the *eiron*—humble, self-deprecating man, combined with the image of the *pharmakos*- the typical scapegoat and random victim, all these unite to form an existential mishmash, a kind of a tarnished halo which weighs heavily on the hero's head. Finally, the character of this hero, his personality and identity are conveyed to the reader as the debris of a self, when such a self and the world in which it operates become awry and are thrown out of joint. Strangely enough, the quantum-equation of this hero's absurd efforts comes when he seeks self-transcendence, though all his gods may have gone defunct. These American novelistic protagonists, eventually, come pretty close to Prometheus chained to the rock with little hope of salvation, and with sex as the only instrument of self-satisfaction.

Right from Nathanael West to Joseph Heller, Kurt Vonnegut, and Jerzy Kosinski, this prismatic canvas of these heroes ,reflects to the reader individuals whose energy eventually becomes the energy of defeat and whose actions may seem as futile. Yet, we can't deny the fact that like their real ancestor Huck Finn, all of them light out for their respective territories. The Territory Ahead forms the quick of all the universe, of all creation with an incarnate dismembered self as the catalytic force. Their tribulations and conflicts become the Sisyphan boulders which an indifferent God makes them toil with.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1]This term has been employed by Northrop Frye in the "Polemical Introduction" to the *Anatomy of Criticism*. Frye coins this expression when he emphasizes that a critic has to work as a scientist and for this purpose he has to construct a conceptual universe of his own in order to keep himself safe from biased and prejudiced opinions especially the erosion of sensibilities.

[2]This term has been referred to by Robert Durham in his work *Northrop Frye and the Critical Method* (New York: Routledge Press, 1982), p.133.

[3]Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971), p.12. All further references shall be abbreviated as *AC* and paginated within the text of the paper.

[4]Ihab Hassan," The Culture of Postmodernism," *Modernism in the Plural: Challenges and Perspectives* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1985). All further references shall be abbreviated as *CPM* and paginated within the text of the paper. "*The Culture of Postmodernism*" forms virtually the introductory chapter to the cited work *Modernism in the Plural*. It is in this very chapter that Hassan precisely distinguishes between modernism and postmodernism and gives to the reader "the im-mediacy of mind" involved in understanding the culture, the poetics and the politics of postmodernism as a phenomenon which has not only invaded in textuality these days and has spared no compartment of human life and living.

[5]Ihab Hassan, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Litera ture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p.5. All further references shall be abbreviated as *DO* and paginated within the text of the paper.

[6]See Albert Camus, *Myth of Sisyphus*. Camus uses these words to denote the ironic apotheosis of absurdity inherent in all human experience.

[9]Ihab Hassan, "The Pattern of Fictional Experince," *Modern American Fiction: Essays in Criticism*, ed. A Walten Litz (New York: OUP, 1963), p.321. All further references shall be abbreviated as *PFE* and paginated within the text of the paper.

KIM: KIPLING'S NOVEL OF A BOY IN THE ANGLO-INDIAN CULTURE

Leonard R.N. Ashley

> Now even in the Bliss Cottage I had a vague notion of an Irish boy, born in India and mixed up in native life. I went so far as to make him the son of a private [sic] in an Irish battalion, and christened him "Kim of the Rishti—short, that is, for Irish. This done, I felt like Mr Micawber that I had as good as paid that I.O.U. on the future, and went after other things for some years.
> —Rudyard Kipling, *Something of Myself for My Friends Known and Unknown* (1937)

Kipling in *Out of India* (1895) reported on "things I saw and failed to see" and the novel *Kim* (1901) is a mixture of observation and imagination. Rudyard Kipling, who was born in India, sent to school in England, returned to India in his teens to work as a newspaper reporter and writer of fiction and poetry. The novel is one beloved of children and adults for generations. It is a juvenile classic and a masterwork of British fiction. It shows, as Stevenson wrote to Henry James, that "Kipling is too clever to live," and *Kim* too great to die.

Actually few people, especially children, go to fiction for accuracy in description of places—and Kipling is very chary albeit memorable in using description—and readers love *Kim* for its ripping adventure yarn compellingly told. This is fiction. It is not true; it is truer than true, even if based on a real life anecdote someone told Kipling in his club and even if Kim is, like Huck Finn, influenced by a real boy whom Kipling heard about having a small place in the Sikkim expedition of 1888. At that time there was a Namgay Doola, son of one Timothy Doolan, a British soldier, brought up as a native boy and speaking only Pushtu. (Only a tiny bit of {Pushtu is found in the languages of *Kim*, which include both Irish English and English English, the fancy language of English educated Indians, Urdu and other tongues "translated" by the British narrator.) Kipling may have used a real boy as his model, though he did not know him personally as Mark Twain knew the original of Huck Finn. Whatever he used he carefully crafted into art and when he finished constructing his tale he cut it to one-tenth of its length and made it into a

pretty well organized one. It strikes us all in different ways at different ages, as George Orwell wrote in the *New English Weekly* for 15 January 1936:

> I worshipped Kipling at thirteen, loathed him at seventeen, enjoyed him at twenty, despised him at twenty-five, and now again rather admire him.

It is best here to emphasize some matters relevant to the ordinary reader's experience of *Kim* rather than the critical pleasure in murdering to dissect. It's the story.

The novel is picaresque, the telling incidents linked by one of the most basic of all structures, the hero on the journey, in this case of a boy called Kimball O'Hara. Because it was written to be read as a whole, not published in parts the way Dickens' *Oliver Twist* was, the boy's fast-paced adventures do not have to have frequent cliff-hanging episode endings even though the work is, like Dickens', melodramatic and concludes with the boy hero prepared for manhood by the decisions and discoveries of the *Bildungsroman* course of life.. *Kim* is a classic initiation tale and a spy story conjoined with the story of a lama seeking spiritual completeness. Youth and age are both on a path to self-fulfillment in an age and nation of lordship and vassaldom, the very heart of Hegel's philosophy and of the political situation of Kipling's era and probably every era.

The movement is notably forward, with few pauses to describe the striking and crowded Indian scenery, more real because of Kipling's actual life than Rider Haggard's or Edgar Rice Burroughs'imaginary Africa. The famous game of observation, familiar to all now because Lord Baden-Powell built it into *Scouting for Boys* educates Kim and the reader also as the story of danger, luck, timing and coincidence unfolds toward the expectable, satisfying conclusion for both the central characters, Kim and his guru.

We know as clearly as we know in an old western (where the good guys wear white hats and the bad guys wear black hats" that the British are the good people and the Russians the bad people. We also know, anent our young hero, of the innocence and openness of children, their dependence upon adults, their bright-eyed observation of their surroundings, their inborn sense of fairness,

and that authors may not expect to harm them and get away with it. The Victorian novel tradition, as Watts (63) reminded us, exhibited an assumption of moral standards shared between author and reader. This feature makes for melodrama, where the reader emotionally participates in the moral conflict of the hero and the villain, of virtue and temptation.

To appreciate the book we may need that Victorian morality but one does not have to know the real India of late days of the raj in the detail of John Darwin's excellent and full history. One can bring to the narrative the myths from other fiction. Daiches in connection with Stevenson's story of a boy in *Kidnapped* recommended that one "provide himself with sufficient background information to be able to find some satisfaction in the historical and topographical elements in the novel" but that is not required for *Kim* because its India is what the narrative says it is, the fiction depending upon old and indeed creating new myth, as Twain does in *Huckleberry Finn.*

First recognize that all places in all fiction are fictional, Defoe's or Dickens' or even a modern detective story writer's London, the historical locations that Henty chose to challenge his boy heroes, the Mississippi river towns that Huck Finn and Nigger Jim visited, as well as imagined places such as C. S. Lweis' Narnia. Realism is verisimilitude, not reality. It is merely like real, not really real. Even films shot on location have set decorators, let alone views chosen and manipulated by the director and the cinematographer. Even a still photograph can distort, be retouched, lie. Indeed science tells us that we actually change reality simply by observing it.

Kipling's India of modern railroads and ancient gods, bears some relation to the actual India of the decade he actually spent there but essentially is no more likely to be identical than, as Twain would say, than lighting and the lightning bug. Kipling simply had at hand the local trappings for an adventure yarn that R[ichard] M[ichael] Ballantyne had shown was beefed up when local color was included. India is a huge stage set for his drama, in and out of focus for literary effect as the background would be in a film. As we moderns read we basically run movies in our minds and as we read Kim we

imagine the setting, perhaps greatly influenced by what we happen to have seen in the cinema or on television. In fact Kipling's personal experience is fundamentally beside the point except for the specialists who want to try to discover precisely, if they can, how life is transmuted into art—and every artist accomplishes that somewhat differently.

Robert Lowell in a poem asks why not tell it like it was? That is fact, not fiction, assuming one never lies to oneself. Art needs only a twig of fact on which to connect the spider's web spun out of the self. Do not forget, to cite another story of a young lad, Henry in *The Red Badge of Courage*, that the author of that novel, the greatest and in most critics' estimation the truest novel to come out of the Civil War in America, was written by a young fellow from New Jersey who never saw battle and who by the time he wrote the novel had probably never even got into a fistfight.

The Great Game in Kipling's novel was not exactly like what he says. Kipling had neither the information nor the desire to present the history of espionage in exhaustive and absolutely correct detail any more than he had to get all the scenery right down to the last detail. A modern spy story has to have far more precise detail than Kipling either desired or required. This novel is not a psychological tour de force; it is a rousing adventure tale.

The story, which I shall try to show derives a good deal from other nineteenth-century juvenile literature, takes place in the midst of the teeming millions of the subcontinent. The tale does not draw as Henty's boys' stories do on specific historical details but simply has in mind the Great Game of British/Russian espionage in India, a new take. André Gide once said that with every new book a writer should lose the admirers of his previous work, and *Kim* is rather unusual in that while Kipling's standard command of demotic speech is highly evident its principal feature is that it is, as Wilde's Lady Bracknell would say, "crowded with incident".

The principal characters are that boy called Kim (Kimball O'Hara), a Tibetan lama named Teshoo (Kim's guru), an Indian horse trader named Mahbub Ali who is working for British intelligence, Hurree Chunder Mookerjee a *babu* or Bengali educated by the British and

also working secretly for them, and Col. Creighton, an officer of the British secret service operating under the cover of a member of the Ethnological Service. Of lesser importance is a Roman Catholic chaplain to The Mavericks named Father Victor (paternal) and the Protestant chaplain the Rev. Arthur Bennett (starchy), and a Mr. Lurgan, a sly gem dealer who trains Kim in We see adequate stereotypes rather than individuals, for the concentration is on the boy. Lurking in the background are the Russian secret service agents, up to no good.

Kim's father was a dissolute sergeant in that Irish regiment nicknamed The Mavericks. He was feckless and died of drink and drugs. Kim's mother, a simple Irish woman, died giving him birth. So the orphan was placed in the hands of a half-caste woman who leaves him more or less to his own devices. Soon the lad is on his own in the streets of Lahore, indistinguishable because of his suntan brown from the Indians all around but—and this is significant—of British origin and so able to stand in a way as a symbol of the British in India. Brewster & Burrell (20) write:

> He [Kipling] is a part of the romantic tradition, and his contribution is the dramatic presentation of the role played by the British Empire in India. The natives usually play interesting bur subordinate parts; the British civil servants, their wives and children, the British soldiers and officers , who form a superior group—these are the people with whom Kipling deals.

When we first see Kim he is 13 but the lama to whom Kim attaches himself is old, perhaps suggesting the interest that some more naïve Europeans took in the ancient spirituality of the exotic east. The lama is on a mission to find the River of the Arrow. His is a religious quest because the river is rumored to wash away all sin. They grow close. Kim defends the lama from the other street arabs (as the Victrians would call them) and begs food for the lama and himself. He promises to take the lama, who is lost, to the sacred city of Benares, but almost immediately Kim is recruited by Mahbub Ali to carry a secret, coded message to Umballa. It is ostensibly about horses but actually it is a piece of vital intelligence. When Mahbub Ali's house is ransacked Kim is certain that the message is important. Kim's involvement with British Intelligence has begun.

With the lama, Kim takes a train and when he and the lama arrive at Umballa the secret message is delivered to British officers. Kim has not been able to read the coded text but in the tradition of the boy hidden in a barrel overhearing something important in Stevenson's *Treasure Island* Kim conceals himself and overhears the British officers discussing the message. It is the signal for a force of 8000 to put down some tribal chieftains who are, as in the Indian Mutiny, ready to rise in rebellion against the British. The boy will not personally be engaged in the war as a Henty boy would be but Kim has carried an important communication.

Much as Kipling, who was born in India though of British parents, colonials who gave him as a forename a British place name and sent him, if unhappily, to a boys' school for Anglo-Indians in Devon, knew and loved everything about the India to which he returned to describe in verse, in journalism, and in fiction. Nonetheless he always retained a sense of British superiority and has been accused of jingosim (from an old music hall song with the line, "We don't want to fight, but by jingo of we do"). For Kipling, Sussex was "belovèd over all," always preferable to India (which he enjoyed) or America (which he did not).

In *Kim* there are some admirable Indians, albeit on the British side, but generally he and other imperialists looked on the Indian Empire as a collection of children who needed Mother England to take care of them, to civilize their millennia-old culture. It was "the white man's burden" he said "to bring the wretched heathen to the light" as Sir Noël Coward slyly sang. Fortunately for this novel it depends on action and not interiority. The whole moves so convincingly forward that there is no time for the objections that Lord David Cecil had about other Victorian novelists (44).

No maidens or passions here as Kim's and the lama's adventures continue, far less autobiography than in *Stalky & Co.* On the road a rich old Kulu lady asks for talismans from the lama and later Kim sees the regimental flag of The Mavericks and connects its red bull on a field of green with a personal prophecy once given him about such a symbol. The regiment's two chaplains confront Kim and notice the locket in which his birth certificate is kept (shades

of Oliver Twist's method of discovering his identity). The chaplains find that Kim is Sgt. O'Hara's son. For Kim, however, the fact that he is now recognized as a British boy , not an Indian, condemns him to a school which he hates (compare Kipling's own youthful experience). This separates Kim from the lama for a British education the lama says he will pay for at St. Xavier's school. But Kim tells the lama he will escape and rejoin him on his search for the sacred river. Meanwhile we focus on Kim who tells the astonished British that he knows that soon 8000 men will be sent out to quell rebellion, which they find to be true.

Beaten by a regimental drummer boy, Kim gets someone to write a letter asking for help to Mahbub Ali. Kim cleverly manages to keep Mahbub Ali from being killed, That Indian spy for the British puts Kim in the charge of Mr. Lurgan who pits Kim against Lurgan's son in the game of observation and also teaches him the intelligence craft of disguise (think of Sir Richard Burton and others in real Victorian life). At Lurgan's house Kim meets Hurree Chunder Mookerjee, another undercover agent, who encourages him to prepare to be active in the Great Game. But first Kim has to be educated, so he returns to St. Xavier's and spends some years training as a surveyor, good cover for covert action. When he is ready, he resumes his Indian disguise and reconnects with the lama ostensibly on the search for River of the Arrow. Once again the two plots, Kim's and the lama's, are connected.

And the rich old Kulu woman resurfaces, as characters often do in melodramatic adventure tales. Kim and the lama head for Delhi, in the train encountering a spy known as E. 23 who fears being killed by enemies awaiting him there but Kim disguises the spy so well that he walks off the train unrecognized. Kim and the lama continue their journey. They reunite with Hurree Chunder Mookerjee and Kim is recruited to more action in the Great Game up north, this time because a Russian and a French agent have both been detected dealing with local authorities as surveyors but actually working for czarist interests. Kim and the lama make for the foothills of the Himalayas. Mookerjee contacts the Russian and the Frenchman and poses as their guide while investigating their

espionage. When Mookerjee leads the two czarist spies to Kim and the lama (why?) the spies tear up some sacred scriptures the lama has always carried. Kim attacks the spies and contrives to steal their documents, which he then conceals on his person. Mookerjee, pretending friendship, leads the defeated czarist spies out of the mountains and away from Kim and the lama. They are now both much the worse for wear because of their stay in the rough north country. Something good must soon happen to them. The rich old lady comes on the scene again to comfort them, take care of them in their illness, adopt Kim as her son, and even to give the lama his life's desire because the River of the Arrow just happens to be a brook on her own property.

Kim is at last secure and Mookerjee is able to present to British authorities the valuable papers Kim obtained from the czarist spies. Thus Kim is recognized for his considerable contribution to the British cause in the Great Game. (see Ure). In the long tradition of resourceful young people as different as the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew and Harriet the Spy, Kim is a master of spy craft. It is with this, more than "puck and luck" and a Horatio Alger patron, that as the story ends Kim is well off, though not married weathily as he might be in a Henty story. Anglo-Indian Kim has proved as valuable an agent as the native Mahbub Ali and Mookerjee, reliable native friends of the British. In the India that Britain seized and long held with the assistance of native troops and left, if reluctantly, with a unifying heritage of English languages and institutions, like the boy in *Captains Courageous* Kim grew to manhood. If nothing else, *Kim*, though it may not address the state of the Indian Empire of the late nineteenth century, surely tells us something about the British mentality of the time, its essential values and attitude toward overseas possessions.

Kipling's prose literature in the long form, one might say, is just like sexual desire: one damn thing after another. If there is theory it is French artificiality, the *dénouement* or deft untying of the knot which you yourself have tied up. *Kim* is just a long tale but a feigned history, histoire in French being simply a story and a story that compels attention by the old device of and then, and then, and then.

Kim offers many nice thens. The growing boy is convincing and he ties the adventures together and the *donnée* (given basis of the plot) is far more credible than, for instance, Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper* . Kim, browned by the Indian sun and so able to pass, is an Anglo-Indian who may in some sense stand for all that was best in the Old India Hands who maintained the raj and made do. Kim even gets past us the on again/off again old lama and old woman and any philosophy you have to pick up from images ("no ideas but in things"—William Carlos Williams). It is basically the boy's own road story, Kerouac well *après la lettre*. It flows. Kipling does not have to intrude the way Henry James does so that "nothing may be lost". Kim needs no complex explanations and no amateur psychologizing; Kim gets by on action and not so much on "the individualisation of its characters and the detailed presentation of the environment" (Watt, *Approaches* 64). Well, passing through adolescence inevitably produces character development and it is India out there, constantly challenging, and Kim does have a few friends, but they do not psychoanalyze him nor does he carefully scrutinize them. We do not get to know his father or mother. Kim's background goes unexplicated. There is no psychiatrist's analysis, no detailed explanation, no modern "richness" of ambiguity.

Kipling was best at the direct short story, not the novel. In this accessible novel for both young and old we see that a writer can get away with an occasional clumsy move as have Melville and Dreiser and other US writers at the top of the bestseller lists because he avoids Stendhal's trap of telling more than he shows and because he remembers that *tale* comes from the Anglo-Saxon for "speech" and that a touch of captivating orality is always better than what Amy Bloom in "A Story" in critical jargon called "the necessary fictive texture, the roiling ambivalence that gives tension to the narrator's affection". He also always uses plain speech which, as poet Marianne Moore put it, "cats and dogs can read". The novel is a pleasure, not a puzzle, a joy, not Joyce.

Kipling goes for the tone of the oldtimer's fireside yarn. He does not bother to try to plumb the soul of a Tibetan lama or an Indian *babu* "locks, stocks, and barrels". He just seeks to entertain

with the sort of "just-so" stories in which Kipling was at his prose best. *Kim* (1901) found him free of the dogmatism old age and the sadness that the Great War was to bring him. He wrote Kim's story freely, somewhat in the spirit of the *Boy's Own Paper* and *Chums*. He wrote it with the spices of the country in his nose and the talk of the people in his ears. He wrote with none of the Victorian curlicues and moral posturing used by Dean Farrar in his "world of school" novels such as *Eric; or, Little by Little*, that even as a child Kipling and Stalky and Company mocked as utterly insupportable. He wrote of a boy whom he saw through adolescence and left to grow up to be a man.

A philosopher has noted that to study language by the use of words is tantamount to trying to build a boat that is already under sail. Of course literary critics are concerned with the words as well as the content and they have attempted to deconstruct Kim, the finished product, from the viewpoint of style. We can simply say it is notably Kiplingesque. "The style is the man himself." "Tell us what you know, any way you will" (Elliott 105). Perhaps it is best to say that there are personal and passing styles of writing fiction, a variety of possible styles. Kipling is unique and Kim unique among his works.

What really stands out in *Kim* is the style that does not stand out. His is the style of a reporter who keeps out of the way of his story and yet slyly can give you the rattle of the Grand Trunk Railway or the stink of the bazaar. Kipling's training on Indian newspapers is everywhere evident, in "The Man Who Would Be King" and even in *Kim*. In Kim he catches not only something of the politics of that country and era but also the language of a variety of individuals. Neill (293) quotes George Moore's praise of Kipling's straightforward way with words and people of all classes:

> Mr. Kipling is a barrack full of oaths and clatter of sabres; but his language is copious, rich sonorous....Others have written more beautifully ...but who else, except Whitman, has written with the whole language since the Elizabethans?

Art outlasts empires; empires in the end are simply "one with Nineveh and Tyre". Who can say exactly what is storytelling's

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permanent magic? Persnickety critic T.S. Eliot said Kipling was "the most inscrutable of authors—impossible to belittle". I would go farther and declare *Kim* "impossible not to admire". After all, it has achieved a permanent place in literature not only among juvenile readers but everyone, in English and in many translations, times and places, and as Tennessee Williams said in concluding his memoirs (291) Kipling did what he wanted to do his own way and without bowing to what Williams called "an ear to the ground of best-seller demands," writing as all writers must in the presence of the genre and the literary traditions but in Kipling's case with a distinct and personal genius.

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CHARLES DICKENS' VIEWS ON EDUCATION IN *HARD TIMES*

Brahma Dutta Sharma

Charles Dickens' novel *Hard Times* is also an embodiment of this novelist's views on education as Thomas Gradgrind, the protagonist of the novel, teaches his students and his children in accordance with his philosophy of education and reaches a stage at which he is able to see what his education has made them. A study of the careers of his students enables us to unearth how far his views on education are acceptable to the novelist and where, according to the novelist, he has gone wrong. Let us see what educational views Gradgrind holds, and what the novelist thinks of them.

The first remarkable thing about Gradgrind's educational views is that he treats his students' minds as empty baskets to be stuffed with facts by the teachers. This fact comes to light when we read the narrator's report that in Gradgrind's eyes students are "little vessels then and there arranged in order, ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until [they] are full to the brim" (*Hard Times* 102). That Gradgrind regards it to be his duty only to stuff his students' minds with facts comes to tight when we read the opening paragraph of the novel in which he explains his theory of education to a fellow teacher, " 'Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts; nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir!'" (1). The narrator reinforces the fact that Gradgrind wants his students to be taught nothing but facts and figures also when the former says: "Thomas Gradgrind, Sir. A man of realities. A man of facts and calculations (2). What deserves mention here is that according to thinkers like Rousseau and Swami Vivekananda a child's mind is not an empty basket and that a child has some inborn potentialities and that it is the educator's function to bring these potentialities to light and to give to the pupil an atmosphere in which they can bloom adequately.

Secondly, Gradgrind rejects the practice of developing students' fancy and imagination outright and wants his students not to rely on fancy or imagination at all. This is evident from Gradgrind's words addressed to Cecilia: " 'You must discard the word Fancy altogether. You have nothing to do with it'" (6). His describing books about fairies, Genies, the Dwarf and the Hunchback, as "destructive nonsense" signifies his rejecting the view that children be told fairy tales and be provided with books about imaginary beings.

Gradgrind expects his children to read exclusively the books of science. The narrator's comment on Gradgrind's philosophy is significant: "In gauging fathomless deeps with his little mean excise-rod, and in staggering over the universe with his rusty stiff-legged compasses he had meant to do great things" (198-99). The suggestion is that as it is not possible to gauge fathomless deeps with a mean excise-rod, it is not possible for one to understand the universe merely by studying the books of science and cramming up facts given in them. The novelist evinces in detail the undesirable consequences of Gradgrind's putting his views into practice. For example, Gradgrind's confining his life and the life of his children to "Facts", as he calls them, has caused monotony and boredom in the life of the family with the result that his son Tom regards his house as a " 'Jaundiced Jail' " (45) rather a home.

Gradgrind's insisting on making teachers communicate to the students exclusively facts signifies that he wants his students to become well-informed. It is good to be well-informed, no doubt, but, the narrator is suggesting, it is not enough for an educated man to be that. Let us take the case of virtue, for example. An educated man should not only know what virtue is but should also be virtuous. Likewise, he should not only know what courage is but also be courageous. Education should not only add to the knowledge of the students and develop their reasoning capacity, but also develop their emotions in the right direction. So Gradgrind's educational philosophy is incomplete. It is to this deficiency in his educational views that Mrs. Gradgrind is drawing attention when she tells her daughter Louisa: " 'You learnt a great deal, Louisa, and so did your brother. Ologies of all kinds from morning to night, and so did your

brother. "But there is something – not an Ology at all – that your father has missed, or forgotten Louisa' " (179).

Since a tree is known by the fruit it bears we can judge an educational philosophy by its products. If an educational system makes students wise enough to understand life adequately and to live successfully and honestly, the philosophy of education on which the system is based must be regarded as successful. But if it fails to do so, it will be judged as a system based on an unsound philosophy. Let us see what Gradgrind's philosophy does to his pupils.

Let us, first, come to the students whom Gradgrind regards as successful. They include Bitzer, Thomas and Louisa. When Gradgrind wants Cecilia to know how to define the animal called the horse, he asks Bitzer to define it and the boy defines the animal in the following words: " 'Quadruped. Graminivorous. Fourty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisors. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries sheds hoofs too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age know by marks in mouth' " (4). This account of the animal includes in it nothing but what can be perceived with one's senses and is marked by accuracy of calculation. But it has nothing to say about the temperament of the animal or its traits like faithfulness to the master, its capability to run very fast. In other words Bitzer's account is very superficial. Since Gradgrind accepts Bitzer's description as absolutely correct, it is evident that this teacher wants his students to acquire only such information about different aspects of the world. Let us also see what Bitzer is able to become with this kind of education. Bitzer, as the narrator reports, is able to get the post of a light porter in a bank. Bitzer is just a porter, but he is naïve enough to regard himself as a model for people to emulate him, as he asserts that people can become rich by becoming provident like him. Since he thinks he is rich, he is like that rat which begins to regard itself as a grocer because it has been able to have a piece of turmeric root. Bitzer is mean enough to earn money even by back-biting. He suggests that one can be free from poverty if one has no wife and children. If Gradgrind's best student behaves like this, it is evident that his educational philosophy is not free from deficiencies.

Let us come to Gradgrind's children too and see what his guidance has done to them. The narrsator's report: "There were five young Gradgrinds, and they were models everyone. They had been lectured, from their tenderest years; coursed like little hares. Almost as soon as they could run alone, they had been made to run to the lecture-room" (7-8) makes it evident that these five children have been brought up and educated in accordance with the educational philosophy of Gradgrind. So if that philosophy is sound they should be at least modestly successful in life. But they are not. Let us come to the careers of Louisa and Tom.

So far as Louisa is concerned, she is a failure in life. She herself admits some of her deficiencies when she says to Cecilia: " 'I am so proud and so hardened, so confused and troubled, so resentful and unjust to everyone and to myself, that everything is stormy, dark, and wicked to me' " (202). As a matter of fact Louisa has developed into a lady who violates the restrictions of propriety in her emotions. We come to know of this fact when we study her relations with her brother Tom and, later, with James Harthouse. Let us, first, come to her relations with her brother Tom. Louisa is excessively fond of Tom. Nay, it is for Tom's sake that Louisa agrees to marry Bounderby, a man old enough to be her father. And when she goes to Tom to find out whether it is he who has committed robbery in her husband's bank, she goes, as she describes herself, " 'barefoot, unclothed, undistinguishable in darkness' " (170). Her going to her brother "unclothed" signifies her violating the rules of propriety and smacks of incestuous relations between the two.

Louisa violates the rules of propriety also in her relations with James Harthouse as she develops so much intimacy with her that she reaches very close to making her husband a cuckold. The education that cannot stop a wife from falling in love with a man who is not her husband must be judged as inadequate. The judgment given by Louisa herself in her words addressed to her father: " '... your philosophy and your teaching will not save me. Now, father, you have brought me to this. Save me by some other means' " (196) is an evidence of the fact that Gradgrind's philosophy of education is not free from deficiencies.

The narrator's rejection of Gradgrind's philosophy of education has been conveyed in one more way. He narrates that Louisa does not get a happy home in her life. He says so in his report: "Herself again a wife – a mother – lovingly watchful of her children, ever careful that they should have a childhood of the mind no less than the childhood of the body, as knowing it to be even a more beautiful thing, and a possession, any hoarded scrap of which is a blessing and happiness to the wisest? Did Louisa see this? Such a thing was never to be' " (267). It means that Louisa's life has been a terrible failure as she never becomes a wife again and has no children.

Let us now come to Thomas and see how far his life has been successful, if at all. According to the narrator's report, Tom's activities are so shameful that he would better commit suicide out of shame for them. The narrator makes the following comment on one of them: "If [Tom] had any sense of what he had done that night, and had been less of a whelp and more of a brother, he might have turned short on the road, might have gone down to the ill-smelling river that was dyed black, might have gone to bed in it for good and all, and have curtained his head for ever with its filthy waters" (123). This means that his behaviour as a brother is very shameful. Another weakness of Tom is that he indulges in gambling. Nay, he goes to the extent of committing robbery in the bank of his brother-in-law. If in spite of the education Tom has received from his father he has become a thief, the education cannot be deemed to be sound.

Gradgrind's only student who moves from adversity to prosperity and gets happiness in the novel is Cecilia. If a woman has happy and loving children around her, she has a happy home. And a person who is trying hard to know humble people and is trying to beautify their lives, he or she is trying to make others happy. Cecilia's heart is full of kindness and charity as she helps the distressed whenever she can. For example, it is she whom Jane finds "taking care of [Louisa] and cooling [her] head" (197) when this eldest daughter of Gradgrind comes to her father at a critical point in her life. She also visits Rachael every night for several days and sits "with her in her small neat room" (229) when she is waiting for Stephen Blackpool to come to clear himself of the charge of robbery.

This Cecilia is the girl whom Gradgrind regarded as a bad student and wanted to turn out of his school and about whom M'Choakumchild had given the report "that she had a very dense head for figures;, that, once possessed with a general idea of the globe, she took the smallest conceivable interest in its exact measurements; that she was extremely slow in acquisitions of dates ... (45). The narrator suggests that helping the humble people is a greater service of mankind than cramming up figures and facts. Cecilia turns out to be a very good judge of character as is evident from what she says about the character of her father: " '[He has left me now] for my good. Nobody understands him as I do; nobody knows him as I do. When he left me for my good – he never would have left me for his own – I know he was almost broken-hearted with the trial. He will not be happy for a single minute, till he comes back' " (52). Nay, she understands even the heart of an animal as she knows how deeply her father's dog Merryleg and her father love each other. This evidences the fact that she might not have been good at figure, she knows people's emotions and can appreciate them. Even Gradgrind has to accept that she is " 'an affectionate, earnest, good young woman, and (in a generally pervading way)... serviceable in the family' " (82). And it is from Cecilia that Louisa learns that life can be made happy by acquiring peace, contentment and honour.

Cecilia turns out to be much wiser than either Gradgrind or Louisa. This fact comes to light when we read her reaction to the decision about the marriage of Louisa and Bounderby. The narrator reports: "When Mr. Gradgrind had presented Mrs. Bounderby, Sissy had suddenly turned her head, and looked, in wonder, in pity, in sorrow, in doubt, in a multitude of emotions, towards Louisa" (92). She is wise enough to realize that Louisa's life will be spoiled by her marriage with Bounderby. Neither Gradgrind nor Louisa is aware of the fact that this marriage will make Louisa's life a tale of miseries.

If we make a contrastive study of Louisa and Cecilia, we come to know the difference between one's only knowing virtue and one's being virtuous. Louisa knows that it is bad to make herself beloved of a man who is not her husband, as when she is on the verge of becoming a victim of James Harthouse's lust, she has to go to her

father's to save herself and reveal to him her dilemma: " 'This minute [Harthouse] expects me, for I could release myself of his presence by no other means. I do not know that I am sorry, I do know that I am ashamed, I do not know that I am degraded in my own esteem. All that I know is, your philosophy and your teaching will not save me' " (196). But she does not know how to get rid of him as she has made a promise to him to return to him. Cecilia, on the other hand, knows how to solve the problem and how to send Harthouse away for ever: she goes to Harthouse when he is waiting for Louisa, and her two sentences make him run away from Coketown finally. One of the sentences is: "You may be sure, Sir, you will never see her again as long as you live'" (206); and the second is: " 'Mr. harthouse ... the only reparation that remains with you, is to leave here immediately and finally' " (209). Louisa was not able to save even herself, but Cecilia is able to save even Louisa.

There comes in the novel a stage at which Gradgrind accepts the failure of his educational philosophy and tells his daughter: " 'I had proved my – my system to myself, and I have rigidly administered it; and I must bear the responsibility of its failures' " (198). At this stage he admits that he has been wrong in rejecting the Heart and regarding the Head as everything as he tells her: " 'I have supposed the head to be all sufficient; how can I venture this morning to say it is! If that other kind of wisdom should be what I have neglected, and should be the instinct that is wanted, Louisa, —' " (199-200). He has not remained a champion of facts alone now.

This brings us to the conclusion that in *Hard Times* Charles Dickens stresses the need of teachers' making efforts also to develop their students' emotions and imagination, and rejects the educational view in which teaching is identified with simple conveying of information.

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AESTHETICS OF ANXIETY: FAMILY AS THE SPLINTERED MIRROR IN JOSEPH HELLER'S *GOOD AS GOLD*

Ashu Vashisht

In the postmodern American novel, written during the last three decades of the previous century, the family has chronically been portrayed as a realm of fractured domesticity, with the institution of marriage evaporating fast and getting consigned to oblivion. In symbolic terms, the pattern of family experience in the works of such writers as Joseph Heller, Jerzy Kosinski, John Hawkes and John Updike, to name only a few, evolves in terms of the 'Aesthetics of Anxiety', incompatibility and incongruity. Gender-relations tend to be demonic with traditional norms like marital fidelity, the sanctity of marriage taking a back-seat. In the novels of Joseph Heller, these symptoms of derailed domesticity and decentered marital compatibility become endemic.

Good as Gold (1979) presents to the reader the story of Bruce Gold, an American University teacher who has two enemies to contend with: sexual boredom and intellectual disparity. As a modern-day Sisyphus, Gold also feels disenchanted within the environs of his Jewish family syndrome. For Bruce, it is the yawning intellectual gulf which nibbles at his mind as he chronically thinks that there is none within his family who can match his intellectual calibre and academic charisma. He considers his family as an existential prison, dungeon of morons, virtually an abyss of nothingness and meaninglessness from which the hero must escape. Gold's feeling of disgust, alienation and *angst* within his family context attains alarming proportions. The functional mediocrity, which hurts Gold as a constant scourge, alienates him further from his wife and children. What aggravates this existential curse for Bruce Gold is his total disgust with his teaching profession, as he considers the University syllabi as absurd.

In consonance with the Jewish-American fictional experience of suffering and pain, Gold feels his being reduced to the level of pharmakos, a schlemiel hero and could no longer be tolerated by

him vis-à-vis his intellectual and political ambitions. He finally decides to try his luck within the power-corridors of Washington White House politics. Paradoxically, once in the midst of the political cauldron in the White House, Gold again feels restive and smothered by a surfeit of Jew-Gentile collisions. In addition to having a tryst with American politics, Bruce Gold feels irresistibly attracted towards rich and glamorous women. In tune with postmodern sociological ethos of contradiction and disorder, Heller's portraiture of the family conundrums in *Good as Gold* becomes a sheer exercise in dissonance, disparity and desperation.

The family individuals who contribute to his personal problematics are as Gold himself says: "five sisters, one brother, three children, a wife, father, stepmother and more in-laws and nieces and nephews than he can keep track of."[1] All these individuals, put together, personify intellectual and academic impoverishment. The problematic of the hero's ill-adjustment within his own family goes to this extent that he desires for a "blast of arctic air to come howling down for the weekend" (*GG*,19).

It is not only Bruce Gold, but the mind-set of every Gold household members is such that each of them becomes an island alienated from the others and they remain at loggerheads with each other. Bruce says "I've got lots of close relatives and I have no one I can talk to either" (164), thereby indicating that even in the midst of the domestic crowd, he feels lonely and miserable. The Kafkaesque metamorphosis from the *alazonic* to *eironic* status is what applies to Gold when he abdicates his family responsibilities by virtually abandoning his wife and children, only to "hunt" on new "pastures." As the denizen of a postmodern society, Gold's over-ambitious mind finds it hard to refrain from the ultimate rebellion: leaving the family environs becomes the only key for a successful realization of personal obsessions and desires.

The novel's narrative reflects the hard reality that the Gold family as a Jewish American construct, permeated by the mass-society-syndrome, holds itself together by a certain type of molecular tension of egos. Gold's brother, sisters and even his stepmother, simply make a pretense of domestic camaraderie. Ironically, it is the

authoritarian credo of the family patriarch, Julius Gold, which is detested by the entire family. The reaction to this dominance becomes evident when Gold talks about it with his kid sister.

The senior Gold is a "demanding, autocratic old four-flusher of a father" (24). His annual visits to the family aggravate the hero's discomfort. The Julius-Bruce dichotomy within the Gold family constitutes the fulcrum of domestic instability with the father having the belief that his son would never lose an opportunity to talk about his son in disparaging terms. As a University professor, Bruce Gold is no doubt an intellectual but unfortunately his father, Julius, is a pure Mammon worshipper, a hen-pecked husband of a much younger wife. The father-brother combination in the form of Julius-Sid syndrome instills pure frustration in Bruce and being the youngest member in the family, he becomes a cynosure of all the others.

Bruce Gold's family angst attains a crescendo when the narrative presents his totally stupid and almost insane stepmother in the form of Gussie Gold. This woman possesses a highly inflated ego, so inflated that it further destabilizes the hero besides eroding the peace, the harmony of the entire Gold family. This woman is not only moronish, highly eccentric but also displays a schizophrenic mind. The height of absurdity and nothingness gets reflected when Gussie learns that Gold has written some articles for publication. In response she utters these words: "another screw has come loose" (401). During family gatherings, Gussie's attitude vis-à-vis Bruce, smacks of excessive antipathy bordering on sheer animosity. Bruce Gold is riddled with questions which seek answers and the family's paradoxical behaviour toward the hero makes his existential status as one of domestic detachment and filial alienation. Consequently, Gold gets psychologically addicted to a kind of persecution complex. He even feels "that the rest of the world also stands ready to make fun of him."[2] With such a psychological build-up, things become pretty difficult for Bruce Gold in having fruitful relations with his family. Bruce Gold's self-enforced alienation from his family attains such a height that he sends money so that his sons remain away to spend their vacations with their friends and don't come home and become vexatious for their father.

As a University teacher, Bruce Gold does possess intellectual acquisitions and allied ambitions, but being a typical detotalized postmodernist hero, he, in his own self, epitomises typical dismantling tendencies like "unmaking... differences, discontinuity, disjunction, disappearance...de-definition, demystification, detotalization..."[3] Gold's personal status as an American detotalized totalizing hero becomes a status of "dismembering" and that is why his mind, psyche and his notions about a climatic self become synonymous as existential paradigms. Gold's grandiose assumptions assume "the label of self-reflexivity, a term denoting an itinerant and potential aggressiveness within the hero's consciousness, and, according to which, he exercises his existential choices and preferences in an anarchic, antiformal and decreative manner."[4]

Gold's total lack of understanding and his gross inability to connect with his family, becomes pretty akin to the situation of other Hellerian heroes like Slocum in *Something Happened* and David in *God Knows*. Gold detests his daughter's aggressive and sullen personality and enjoys outsmarting her in arguments and battles of wit. All the same this barely adolescent girl easily envisions that her father nurses some hidden ulterior designs vis-à-vis his family:

> 'You're moving out, ain't you?' She charged, with acumen rare in one so fresh in years.
>
> 'No, I'm not.' He made a face at the scornful laugh she discharged. 'I'm merely packing things I'll need at my studio for my work and have to take with me to Washington.'
>
> 'Don't shit me', said Dina. 'You're getting a divorce.'
>
> 'That's no way for a little girl to talk.' (*GG* 226-227)

The itinerant dismantling of family ties and bonds becomes quite visible in this conversation between father and daughter, a quintessential attribute of the deculture that the ethos of mass society perpetuates and proliferates. Irony, absurdity and comic apocalypse combine to present Gold as a dehumanized mass society denizen desperate to neutralize his daughter's hostility toward him. Whether as a father or as a husband, Gold now clearly understands his existential family status as devalued and dismantled, unless a miraculous turn of events would undo the damage.

Belle, Gold's wife, a poor helpless woman wedded to family

responsibilities, personifies in her self "the catastrophe of defective intelligence."[5] Belle Gold, as a middle-class housewife, intrinsically devoted to the family, wallows in the realms of dullness, ennui and a disjunctive dissonance with the husband. In fact, this postmodern American intellectual hero belongs to "a chattering-monkey society devoted to snobbery and slander."[6] In this connection, the ironic *anagnorisis* becomes Gold's excessive personal and intellectual aspirations, coupled with Belle's offensive and intolerable mediocrity.

The Bruce-Belle equation can be deciphered in symbolic parlance as "close to a parody of tragic irony..."[7] Surrealistic absurdity attains a crescendo when the reader understands, from the narrative of *Good as Gold*, the basic reality pertaining to Gold's utter lack of interest in his wife. Even a slight provocation or incitement becomes the reason enough to make the hero abandon his wife and leave her as a lonely figure:

> 'I don't love Belle. Family life is a bore. So is writing and teaching... I don't feel close to anyone in the world. Everything I do now is boring. I want to marry money.' (*GG* 164)

The alibi of family boredom and sexual staleness is a manufactured one, actually the hero's psychological manifestations operate contrary to the Jewish code of human behaviour. As an archetypal Jewish American hero, Gold becomes a square in a peg-hole within the cumulative spectrum of his household. Gold's malcontent attitude within the family environment does not have its genesis either in sexual boredom or intellectual inequality. The trouble actually springs from Gold's proclivity toward forging liaisons with rich, influential and glamorous women, besides his unbridled ambition to make it big in the world of American politics.

Bruce Gold's extra-marital flings are limitless. In spite of being married to a devoted self-effacing wife, he still engages himself with a rich and glamorous woman named Andrea Conover, besides his amorous relationship with his daughter's teacher, Linda. The hero not only enjoys sexual escapades but also nourishes calculated motives to get a higher position in the White House scenario through Andrea's father, a man with tons of money and high connections. Andrea can also be labeled, in the postmodernist doxified parlance,

as a Metafictive Female Adam who pays back to her male counterpart in self-reflexive hard cash.

Chance, absurdity and coincidence become the presiding norms of Gold's existential geography in the inter-family as well as the intra-family situations. The often proclaimed Gold family's unhealthy domestic ambience and intolerant mediocrity constitute for Gold the chosen elixir to launch himself on a route of escape, an escape from the wasteland of domesticity. Bruce Gold through his act of repudiation of a society by simply walking out of it, attains the status of a *"pharmakos* in reverse."[8] Gold is no Huck Finn who can easily light out for his territory, neither can he become the "deep-diver" having the capability to "dive" beneath the "frozen surface." The Gold family in terms of the hero's maladjustment within it, can metaphorically be defined as a "hard crust" on the surface of which the hero continues to lose his balance and slip awfully into the misleading lanes of his own spiritual labyrinth.

Gold's ironic tryst with White House Politics in Washington, is sought to be a perfect path of escape by the hero. Unfortunately, American hard-core politics at the highest level proves to be Gold's Gordian Knot which he can neither unravel nor negotiate. The irresistible magnetism of White House high-profile politics becomes Gold's Waterloo. Once within the White House Political scenario, Gold fails to become another Henry Kissinger and soon feels unnervingly disillusioned. Poor Gold doesn't know that as an academic he is totally ill-suited for the quicksand world of American politics, especially the nebulous vortex of White House politics. Gold's run from family comforts to the turbulent sea of American politics becomes a run across the vistas of futility, anarchy and existential absurdist disbursement. Heller delivers a last nail in his hero's Quixotic self when Bruce receives news about his elder brother Sid's death and the father being too senile with advanced old age. Gold faces an anticlimax. He no longer nourishes the desire to meet the US President, when a chance to do so comes. He finally puts his foot down and stages a comeback to the family hearth, and feels that he could not "consider a government appointment then and might not want to in the future" (*GG* 456).

As an American novelistic hero, Bruce Gold is no different from his novelistic counterparts of other writers like John Updike, Kurt Vonnegut, Jerzy Kosinski and others. All the heroes of these writers chalk out and apply their existential parameters in the mould of American Romance to undertake personal odysseys of exploration, rediscovery and reaffirmation, an endeavour in which, more often than not, they end up as ironic *alazons.* Gold's own self becomes akin to a fractured mirror which reflects no coherent image or any meaningful pattern.

Finally, we can conclude by observing that in *Good as Gold,* the family is throughout portrayed as a Jewish American household suffering acutely from an aesthetics of anxiety in which even the family inmates become individual islands, bereft of any understanding, cohesion or meaningful productive relationships. Gold's return from politics to domesticity becomes a paradigm of detotolization which can be defined as "the paradoxical, supremely difficult threshold-crossing of the hero's return from the mystic realm into the land of common day."[9] Gold's "departure" is justified on unethical premises, his "initiation" a demonic depredation, and his "return" a belated recognition of a hard truth. Heller in *Good as Gold* displays all the barbs in his quiver of biting satire and unrelenting indictment of Adamic failure and quixotic redemption.

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[3]Ihab Hassan, "The Culture of Postmodernism," *Modernism in the Plural: Challenges and Perspectives* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1985), p.20.

[4]Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton University Press, 1971), p.48.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York: Bollingen Foundation, Inc., 1956), p.216.

CULTURAL PLURALISM IN UMA PARMESHWARAN'S *THE SWEET SMELL OF MOTHER'S MILK WET BODICE*

Monika Gupta

Culture helps to integrate intellectualism in society along with the way people dress, behave, speak, and follow customs and rituals. People have their own cultures in places where they live, but "...diversity, migration, and social integration and cohesion, coincide with increasing awareness..." ("C.P.A.M:M.U.I.D.," Internet). These are the chief features of cultural pluralism. It is inevitable that culture must undergo a drastic change at some point of time. When people interact with one another, there is bound to be an inherent change. Ethnic differences and religious diversities lead to the multiculturalism due to the interactions at the above levels.

There are people who feel that multiculturalism has diversified national and communal goals, thus creating a gap instead of bridging the gap. Laws have been enacted to put a stop to racist activities. The media has only fanned the fire and they need to be sensitive to issues of ethnic minorities. Ethnic minorities have enriched the cultural heritage of many countries. Immigrants have highlighted loss of identity and have been nostalgic about it in their writings. The inevitable non-equation between the colored people and whites has been heightened by immigrant writings. Uma Parmeshwaran, Bharati Mukherjee, Rohinton Mistry and others have dwelt on issues of survival and dislocation. They have felt the arrows of racism and cultural shock. They have highlighted the alienation experienced by immigrants and their marginalization at every level. The immigrants have lived in a hostile environment and have portrayed this in their writings. Second generation children identify with those of the country they are living in and have no loyalties to their parents of former countries and do not feel alienated like their parents who are immigrants from another country. Thus, the child differs culturally, unlike her parents. Immigrants are still attached to their home country and there is no question of the greater country to adjust to the ways of immigrants. Immigrants also tend to stick to their cul-

tural identity and refuse to amalgamate in the mainstream and are at the crossroads. They have yet to shed their cultural prejudices and enter into the veins of the country they live in. So, a lose gain situation should exist whereby the immigrants are able to discard some of their cultural baggage and gain entry into the society they are dealing with at present. They have to learn to cope with a new environment and make new lives. Immigrants must realize that every struggle is a victory. Ethnic groups hanker to be accepted and recognized in a foreign country. But they are the voice to reckon with today.

Diasporic writers have put forward their views and they have highlighted cultural diversities and propagated a better understanding of the same. South-Asian Women are tied to the apron strings of patriarchal requirements. They are subdued by males and traditional mores. Though they are required to contribute economically, at home they are given a back-seat by men. Thus, they lose their identities and are forced to adjust in foreign settings whereby they end up being maladjusted. There is a void that they cannot fill but now women are trying to break out of stereotyped roles. At the International level people are learning how to cope up with differences that extend beyond race and gender. Of course, some immigrants do settle down in their new countries where they immigrate. Others are victims in some way or the other and experience exploitation, and are not as successful as their white counterparts sometimes. Consequently, they tend to get disappointed and are depressed, frustrated and lonely at times. Immigrants are nostalgic and tend to cling to the cultures of their homeland and become quite obsessive about their home country. They tend to stick to their communal thinking and find it difficult to integrate into the mainstream of the society they are living in. They are exploited economically and are like birds in a cage, and hence they cannot assimilate into the culture that exists at the given point of time. They are under a state of conflict most of the time. They often try to figure out which one is better, their homeland or their present location where their aspirations lie. They are in a metamorphic situation and end up feeling alienated. Immigrants are frustrated, depressed and in a dilemma,

and thus psychologically injured. There is a void that the immigrant cannot fill inspite of the realization of materialistic goals. Though she/he is alive, there is some part of her/him which is not alive and one is confused. [S]he suffers from an identity crisis. One is pulled from different directions, but it is passion that makes one move on in life.

People want to move to the West to carve a novel cultural domain and many end up being confused and alienated. Immigrant writers have analyzed male and female experiences that are responsible for displacement. Thus, new observations have been portrayed. Man by nature is emotional and wants to ascertain his lineage and re-establish emotional ties. He/she wants to delve into one's roots and cross the psychological barriers of domicile and diasporic consciousness. There are displacements and Canada encourages multiculturalism, and live and let live attitudes among different races and diverse cultures:

> The multiculturalism Department is a Canadian invention. It is supposed to ensure that ethnic cultures are able to flourish, so that Canadian Society will consist of mosaic of cultures that's their favorite word, mosaic instead of one uniform mix, like the American melting pot. If you ask me, mosaic and melting pot are both nonsense, and ethnic is a polite way of saying bloody foreigner (Mistry, *Tales from Firozsha Baag* 160).

Rohinton Mistry has skillfully debated about multiculturalism along with academicians and intellectuals for a very long time now. Though they are very apt and non-committal linguistically, yet even after being politically correct, the problems of the ethnic minority and racism have yet to be sorted out effectively so that there can be a cultural balance. Racism does exist and it is like cancer that has grown beyond proportions, but there can be a remedy for this malady and a multicultural society is of great value to nations that house immigrants and promote a 'brotherhood of man' spirit. People leave their country for a foreign abode and visualize greener pastures. The ultimate realization is a loss of identity. Salman Rushdie while talking to Guntar Grass says:

> A full migrant suffers, traditionally, a triple disruption: he loses his place, he enters into an alien language, and he finds himself surrounded by beings whose social behavior and codes are unlike and sometimes even offensive

> to his own. And this is what makes a migrant such a pathetic figure, because roots, languages and social norms have been three of the most important parts of the definition what is called a human being. (*Imaginary Homelands* 134)

Ethnic cultures are voicing concerns and trying to preserve their identities and cultures. Of course, there is an identity crisis that is experienced by the immigrants when they try to adapt and adjust in alien surroundings and finally enter the main stream. People weave webs of imagination and are nostalgic about how they grow up and refuse to forget their childhood experiences. Indians like to live in close knit groups and choose to remember the good old days of their childhood in India and are static about the time they left and are surprised to see a 'new India' during their visits.

Expatriate writers perceive multicultural scenario from personal experiences. They vividly weave day to day situations as against different cultures that they face. Initially, they enter a new country with fear and awe, and miss their native place. Then they follow the survival of the fittest instinct. They feel that they have to prove themselves at every level, at home and at the workplace. They join social and political groups. Once they are secure in their jobs, they join organizations within their ethnic groups. It is much later that they tend to participate in large groups outside their own groups. One wonders if immigrants assimilate completely. Many are of the view that the persons of the first generation find it difficult to merge completely into a new society. They may be able to adjust, but as far as assimilation is concerned they have their limitations. If they receive a hostile reception by the host country, it is impossible to assimilate fully, but a friendly reception quells fears and helps them to assimilate. If one enters the host country at a younger age, it is easier to assimilate. The length of the stay and exposure to plural cultures help one to assimilate. The older the immigrant, the longer it takes to adjust.

Whatever the immigrant has learnt initially is literally meaningless in a new country. Everything has to be learnt again and the realization is stark. The newer generation finds it relatively easier to adapt and assimilate into a new culture as they have lesser strings

attached to their home country. There is a question about preserving one's hybrid identity. The older generation finds it difficult to handle chores which were carried out by domestic helps in their home country. The idea of washing the dishes, handling the laundry and carrying out house repairs is not at all appreciated. Then, men and women are different. The women who are confined to their homes cling to traditions and thrust it down the throats of the younger people who find it difficult to adjust the traditional mores of their parents. Indian women in such circumstances are under the spell of Indian culture. But their indomitable spirit helps them to live in an alien country and mix around freely with their counterparts. When the younger generations begin to move on and make their own decisions, it is the men who cannot bear that the children could be so independent as not to consult them. They curse the environment and themselves for coming and settling down in a country that has a different set of values. The first generations have to struggle hard to fit into an alien culture. They cannot stand the racial discrimination thrust upon them and their color is also a cause that adds up to their discrimination. They feel uneasy when the whites do not accept them as equals. An immigrant is like a pendulum that swings from his own culture to an alien culture. The immigrants under these circumstances can never get over the nostalgic feelings for the country of their birth, though they may have better jobs and earn bigger pay packets.

From the first generation to the third generation, immigrants are evolving and there are vast changes in their perspectives. Through her protagonists, Uma Parmeshwaran tells us that anyone who migrates to any country should consider the new country as his only home. In *The Sweet Smell of Mother's Milk Wet Bodice*, one can discern cultural pluralism. Namita, the protagonist, is bogged down in an abusive relationship with her husband. Her husband wants to divorce her and he is encouraged by his father who wants Namita to sign the petition for divorce. Once she goes to a children's playground and sits on a bench, and as gets so nervous as wants to scream with fear. She is forced to ring the Salvation Army and her mentor is Krista. Namita is nostalgic about peacock garden in his

home town Jaipur. She reminisces about the Ashoka trees, big gulmohars, raat-ki-rani and chameli. She remembers the peacocks and peahens, her brothers and sisters, the statues in the garden and her stepmother Bina ma. Now at the stage when Namita has been thrown out by her husband and in-laws, she wants to ring up her stepmother (she knows) who will help her to return at any cost but suddenly she tires to be brave and wants to handle her problems all by herself. She surprises Krista by quoting from Shakespeare. Krista is astonished that Namita who, "... wears typically outlandish clothes and heavy gold jewellery and silver works sandals" should be so well versed in English literature. She finds Namita quite different from stereotyped Indian women. Her in-laws are "devils incarnate" (27). Namita's father in India is broad-minded and refuses to give dowry in his daughter's marriage. She is adjusting and gullible when she is married to Tarun, but soon learns that his parents wanted cash at her marriage.

Though Namita is a simple girl, she has enough guts and gets the required help from Krista, lawyers and counselors. She is actually the typical Indian caught up in the net of multiculturalism. She waits for Tarun's calls when she is away at the shelter and forgives her husband thinking that he has changed for the better. She is gullible and at the Salvation Army residence, she permits Tarun to visit her everyday and allows him to make love to her. Nevertheless, he divorces her. She even tolerates his tantrums when he learns that her lawyer is contesting her case. She is shocked to know that Tarun has made allegations that she has been adulterous and cruel. She takes a long time to disclose to a woman at a temple that she has been abused by her husband and is on her own.

Obviously, Uma Parmeshwaran in *The Sweet Smell of Mother's Milk Wet Bodice* has highlighted the multiculturalism of Indian immigrants abroad. Those who have settled down have adapted but are still attached to their ethnocentric groups. In Namita's case, she goes to the temple seeking help from fellow community members, but she is not able to get it, and this proves that culture-pluralism "is a self-defeating philosophy" ("A.A.R.C.P.," Internet). Charu tells her that she is disappointed as no one has helped her within the

community. She says:

> "Just that I sure didn't find any here, and I wanted to know how and where you found any. See them? All these ladies, not one has any real empathy. Men are like that, they said. They'll come around, they said. Don't wash dirty linen in public — that's their favourite line. Which makes me wonder how many of them are putting up with horse manure and not letting on"....
> "I came here thinking I'd get some help from someone who'd understand our culture." (66)

Charu has been abused by her husband. She was raped three times in a night when she was six months' pregnant and this resulted in miscarriage. She is advised not to mind it as she would conceive again. Namita knows that her husband Tarun is having an affair with his sister-in-law Menaka. Eventually, she shifts into her own apartment. Tarun is an ugly looking cad. She rings an empty saucepan on his head one day and it is a cathartic release for her as she throws him out and tells him not to come near her again. She goes to her husband's house to retrieve Krishna's statue that is a lucky talisman for her and she picks it up. Her father-in-law commands her to put it down. She calls her father-in-law a vindictive old man and that shocks her mother-in-law. Namita emerges as a bold woman who can face the world. She subconsciously discards her cultural baggage and gains acceptability to an extent. She loses her husband but has found her Krishna and it helps her to overcome her emotional traumas. In fact, Uma Parmshwaran has gone into the kernel of cultural pluralism, and the transformation of Namita is complete as she learns to stand up for herself.

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THIS SIDE JORDAN : INTERSECTION OF RACE AND GENDER

Vallari Gaur

This Side Jordan is the first major fictional work of the famous Canadian writer Margaret Laurence. It is set in Ghana in the 1950s, in or near its capital Accra, a city "where you could feel tomorrow being reached for... " (*TSJ* 268). It is written in the traditional form — a realistic third person narrative, neatly structured around an African couple (Nathaniel and Aya Amegbe) and an English couple (Johnnie and Miranda Kestoe). The narrative is broken into by the African protagonist's inner dialogues, introduced with a dash. Laurence has creatively used metaphors of the Bible, of nature and even of cloth in it. The title itself is metaphorical — the River Jordan, the river of water and of blood, the Promised Land, and Mary.

During her African days Laurence's liberal stance was encouraged by her friendship with Ofosu , a teacher at Achimsta College. He is often considered to be the model for Nathaniel, the African school teacher in *This Side Jordan*. Margret Laurence and Ofosu had a strange love-hate relationship from the very outset (King 116). Laurence's association with him helped to unleash her creativity. In *This Side Jordan*, inquisitive Miranda pursues a friendship with Nathaniel which he neither understands nor wants. The tenuous, never really established relationship between the wife of the chief accountant at Allkirk, Moore and Bright, and a teacher at the ironically named Futura Academy, holds the two plot strands of the novel together, viz., the issues of race and gender.

Bell Hooks has remarked that initially feminist theory is the site for the "critical interrogation and reimagining of sexist gender roles" (Hooks xi). She posits that oppression itself cannot be labeled and divided into compartmentalized categories and commonalities of patterns cannot be ignored as different forms of oppression are interrelated. Laurence has foregrounded the interwoven nature of movements of protest in *This Side Jordan*. The "Birthing" scene is the climax of the novel and suggests that women cross over to the other side of the river of life, and it also changes men/husbands.

Thus birthing becomes a catalyst of change. The metaphorical title of the novel not only provides a main framework for the novel, but also suggests apocalyptic overtones suitable to evoke momentous changes. It refers to a turning point after a long struggle or journey. The figures of beings at the River Jordan and crossing to the Promised Land on the other side suggest transition to a new independence as a country and as an individual. The title therefore suggests a blend of the strains of race and gender woven intricately in the thematic structure of the novel.

Gender theories discourage the binary thinking of and appreciate the diversity of experiences, instead of mystifying the true nature of women's complex social realities. *This Side Jordan* suggests that the gender oppression of a white woman is not the same as that of a Gold Coast woman. The parallel story of the struggle for national independence can also be studied from the post-colonial perspective. Theories of gender and post-colonialism are related to each other as they both refrain from attributing oppression to any single cause and do not accept any simple hierarchy of power. They are linked together in their criticism of exploitation associated with hegemony. Black women experience oppression due to their race and class, and also due to their gender. Critics like Barbara Christian, Andrea Benton Rushing and Bell Hooks point out that postmodernism, since it has been constructed in reaction and against high modernism, seldom mentions the experiences of black women. Deborah McDowell feels that Black feminist criticism is a "knotty issue" and has to determine the extent to which their criticism intersects with that of White feminist critics (McDowell 230-32).

This Side Jordan records how black women are subjected to oppression both from the men of their own race and from the Whites, whose dominance is a social construct. It presents several incidents of child prostitution and of young adolescent girls marrying much older men as girls cannot claim any choices. The plight of the young African, barely sixteen, prostitute Emerald is illustrative in this context. She was arranged by Lamptey so that Johnnie does not press any case of bribery against his friend Nathaniel. The incidence shows a patriarchal connivance which has traditionally

used female body as an object and as an asset for barter. Johnnie rapes her brutally, taking her silence and seeming uncertainty as her connivance with the two African males. Only later on he realizes that the girl's fear was rooted in the painful puberty rites of African tribes (*TSJ* 232-33). This young girl, whose name suggests her virginity, is a victim of the gendered norms of her own people, as well as of the racial prejudices of the colonizers. Her sexual abuse is a sad commentary on the androcentric culture which condemns women to a subordinate state.

Prevalence of sexist stereotypes and the gendered hierarchy generate a comfort zone as far as the acceptance of violence against women is concerned. In the power relationship of a gendered society, it is acceptable for a dominant group to maintain power over the dominated by using coercive force (Hooks 118). Masks of gentility and self control are easily dropped and women are abased to the level of a thing. Laurence has portrayed how unequal marriages are culminated in patriarchal societies to continue the gendered supremacy of the male. *This Side Jordan* presents the character of an unnamed "small wife" – a fourteen year old girl, the servant Whiskey gets for himself using the money given to him by Miranda for settling a court case against his brother. Laurence mentions that many African Christians practiced polygamy and felt that if the second wife is termed as the "small-wife", it somehow does not count (*TSJ* 133). This incident shows how the patriarchal culture does not encourage a condition of reciprocity between the two sexes. In primitive societies they were disposed of like a thing – included in deals agreed upon by two groups. Racial prejudices further aggravate the situation. Whiskey's "small wife" is brutally beaten by her much older husband. Johnnie also treats this girl as a sex-object. He cannot resist the temptation of touching her when he finds this young "bush-girl" alone in the afternoon. When his advances are rejected, he hits the girl hard across the face and feels a "quick flare of pleasure" (135). A human body is given a role according to the viewer's gendered subjectivity. An individual's concept of body image is conditioned by an inner mental map supplied by cultural preferences. One experiences bodies in a socially mediated way.

Racial prejudices are also a part of the social mediation. Within the framework of colonial relationships, a white man's treatment of white and black women is different. A white man feels sexually attracted towards a black girl, but the emotion of love is reserved only for a white woman. Black women provide sexual possibilities precluded from respectability. Coupled with racial biases, gendered exploitation results in physical and psychological trauma for black women as exhibited in *This Side Jordan*. These images of abuse of women and the nonchalant attitude of men towards it suggest that such acts come within the normative boundaries of masculinity across cultures. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler has argued that the intelligibility of seemingly natural gender identities and behaviours requires the disciplining of performative acts that might trouble the coherence of binary sex and gender categories (Butler 23). Even the labeling of particular performances as transgressive reifies the normalcy of binary sex and gender categories. Acts of transgression which otherwise may include various degrees of public discomfort and inquiry, are treated as normal after the cultural acquiescence and consequential assimilation. When particular acts of transgression, "perceived to be extraordinary in nature, become highly visible in public discourse, the "containing" of those acts often entails the reproduction and circulation of elaborate narratives that explain the "abnormalities" in normative ways" (Holland 250). The incidents of Emerald's rape and the "small wife's" beatings explain how the ability to distinguish right from wrong is muffled by the gendered notions of man–woman relationship: "A few minutes later he heard her screams. The blow must have made a betraying welt. Whiskey was beating her. Jonnie grasped the chair-arm and closed his eyes. But he did not go out to stop the beating. It was none of his business" (*TSJ* 135).

Gendered identities and their problematic relationships are easily discernible in the main characters of the novel – Johnnie Kestoe and his wife Miranda, the British expatriates and colonial administrators; and Nathaniel Amegbe, the son of the chief's drummer and a school teacher and his wife Aya. Although beliefs and attitudes are part of gender ideology, it is a broader, encompassing world-

view that perpetuates gender inequality while justifying natural or assumed arrangements. Thus, the construction of gender is latent, making it difficult to empirically assess its impact area. Johnnie Kestoe's firm wants to promote Africanization, a programme to gradually permit Africans to take over certain administrative posts hitherto held by the Europeans only (33-38). In this connection Johnnie happens to meet Victor Edusei, a black journalist with a local paper, and educated in London. Initial introduction of Johnnie with Victor includes a warning by Victor to leave his girl friend alone (39). Johnnie's guarded replies sum up his colonial and patriarchal mind-set clearly. Victor's girl friend Charity is just another black girl for him. He can dance and flirt with her, but would not even be able to recognize her if chances to see her again. This idea is shared by other white professionals also. They feel outrageous when a young African boy asks James' permission to dance with Cora. Cora's face flushes damson-red and James unblinkingly stares the boy down (11).

Gender construction in patriarchal society has always been based on the inherent inequality of the sexual relationships, which in turn form the basis of the system of power. Joan W. Scott has remarked that sexuality is to feminism what work is to Marxism: that which is most one's own, yet most taken away. (Scott 1058). Gendered exploitation is further extended to races which the white society considers as "inferior". The colonial mindset perceived imperialism to be a white man's burden establish the order and the ideals of their race to others – the diversity of approaches treated as connectable under this perceived burden is articulated in *This Side Jordan* through characters like James Thayer, the firm's manager, and his wife Cora Thayer, whose credulous beliefs strike the reader as being comic-tragic. James Thayer loves Africa, but considers Africans to be children, and thus incapable of shouldering any responsibility. He is used to those days when the Whites could administer a "smart kick to their backside" and an African "did what he was told" (*TSJ* 92). His wife Cora Thayer, equally vividly represents the gendered segregation abetted by the colonial mind-set. The double colonization experienced by women in the former colo-

nized societies – black as well as white – are effectively explored by Laurence through her character. Cora abhors Africa and strangely, also possesses a fear of it. She wants to make her house a fortress against all African things and clutters it with brocade pieces. She is unable to transcend the barriers of patriarchal diktats and be herself. The Cunninghams - Bedford and Helen- also represent the intertwined strains of colonialism and gender. Bedford turns to alcohol to evade his problems (129). Helen is unable to think beyond the socially sanctioned gendered boundaries (124).

Johnnie's wife Miranda is portrayed as kindly and naive. Unlike Johnnie, who is calculative, she is spontaneous, sensitive and does not have the racial egotism of Bedfords or Thayers. Commenting that she reminds the readers of Laurence herself as a young woman in Somaliland and Ghana, Patricia Morley remarks that Miranda's story should be read in conjunction with Laurence's first published article, "The very Best Intentions" (1964). The article portrays two Laurences, one a naïve liberal, the other an older, wiser self who mocks the first (Morley 66). In Miranda's portrait we find that the extent of gendered norms is relatively mitigated. It is reflected in her independent opinion, ideological clashes with her husband, as well as in her relationship with the African people. She, however, does not fully comprehend the subtleties of behavior and complexities lacing interpersonal understanding in an African society, where her presence is primarily that of a white woman. She forces Nathaniel to show her around the market, but is blithely unaware that Nathaniel may have to face cruel leering jokes on account of this tour. Despite it, she is week in her general obedience to her husband Jonnie. The impact of gender stereo-types on her behavior makes it non-agentic and conformist. Even for Nathaniel she remains primarily a sexual curiosity despite her attempts at developing easy friendship with him. Nathaniel views her primarily as a woman, and speculates about her sexuality, "…. He wondered if these boy-women could change, suddenly, at nightfall, become soft and hungry and supple. It was ridiculous. He could not imagine it" (*TSJ* 161). This episode shows that desire, as a part of sexuality is socially constituted. Butler's view is significant in this context, "Gender does not happen once

and for all when we are born, but is a sequence of repeated acts that harden into the appearance of something that's been there all along" (Quoted by Salih 66). Vectors of power operate simultaneously and through one another. Race and gender are neither autonomous nor discrete axes of power within a colonial context.

The portrayal of Aya, Nathaniel's wife, shows the dominance of gendered norms in an African society clashing with the colonial forces. She is twenty four, and has been married for eight years. After two miscarriages, she is expecting a child again – it is the incident of her childbirth which has connected her with Miranda. Nathaniel feels that she is intellectually inferior to her and speaks to her in Twi, the local language, instead of English (*TSJ* 47). Post-colonial criticism has by and large ignored the traumas faced by women. Critics like Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Paulo Freire and Aimé Césaire; who have talked in detail about colonization, racism, classism and revolutionary struggle; often ignore issues of sexist and gendered oppression in their own writing. Bell Hooks has quoted an essay "Dualist culture and Beyond" by John Hodge in which he has stressed that the "family in our society, both traditionally and legally, reflects the dualist values of hierarchy and coercive authoritarian control which are exemplified in parent–child and husband–wife relationships" (Hooks 37). Within the family, black as well as white, children learn to accept male supremacy and the group oppression of women. Thus, while the colonial rule furthers the exploitation of the races, societal structures further the secondary status of women. Nathaniel insists that Aya gives birth to their son Joshua in the hospital and hopes that like the mythological leader of the Israelites, their son will also cross the Jordan and find the Promised Land in an independent country.

This Side Jordan clearly posits that white women are encouraged to withdraw from the dominant male culture to create their own subcultures; whereas men are socialized to passively accept sexist ideology. Black feminist critics have opposed the domination of white feminism and its narrowness which subtly excludes the experiences of black women. They also feel that the black male abuse of women is a reflection of frustrated masculinity. Successfully projecting

parallel world and parallel sensitivities in the novel, Laurence has taken up the issues related with the shaping up of gendered identities in different races and cultures. The portrayal of most of the characters suggests that society encourages men and women to follow pre-cut grooves through various materialist and discursive institutions. Miranda and Nathaniel come across as characters who are uncomfortable with their conditioning, but even they do not possess capabilities to ignore/overcome it.

At the same time, it can be argued that the Biblical image of the River Jordan and crossing to the promised land posit a tantalizing future of transition from the old traditional ways to a new life of independence as an individual and as a country. Motherhood is also seen as a potential force to remove hostilities. Laurence attempts to create secure meanings in the lives of her characters, even if these meanings are not organically linked with their gendered identities. *This Side Jordan* suggestively evinces that self-actualization can be a possibility only when the gendered notions are shunned.

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A COCKTAIL OF REALISM AND FANTASY: NAYANTARA SAHGAL'S *MISTAKEN IDENTITY*

Vipin Singh Chauhan

First published in 1988, *Mistaken Identity*, one of Nayantara Sahgal's novels of maturity, is remarkable in ways more than one. Much more than a political novel, it is deeply concerned with individual's freedom from social constraints — 'the confines of power' — and mistaken identity for attaining his true self. It has only a little to do with autobiographical facts, and political, colonial, postcolonial, global issues, etc. Her feminist preoccupation is subservient to man's quest for freedom from varied forms of shackles hindering the realisation of his/her identity. The kind of social freedom portrayed in this novel is certainly ahead of the time delineated in the book, as will be evident from the ensuing discussion. Inevitably, the narrative is permeated with the explicit as well as implicit strain of fantasy. However, it is not totally cut off from the realities of life; man-woman relationship — the primary concern of Nayantara Sahgal in all her writings — is cast in the mould of fantasy against the backdrop of political/historical realities. Hence Jasbir Jain's study of the novel under the heading "Goodbye to Realism: *Mistaken Identity*" holds only half truth, for the narrative is studded with some landmark events of Indian political history such as the Khilafat Movement, the aftermath of the Dandi Salt Movement, etc. Thus, it is an artistic cocktail of facts and fantasy, but undoubtedly a well-thoughtout and meaningful one.

The novel is, indeed, more of a social revolution, couched in fantasy, than a political one. It is a moving account of two love-martyrs — Bhushan, the protagonist, and his mother, the Rajput queen of Vijaygarh —; the two Hindus, one (Bhushan) taking a Muslim girl as her first love (who could not be either his fiance or wife), and the other a Hindu middle-aged woman (the queen of a State) running with a Muslim comrade taking him as her second husband. Here is a union of kindred souls that, as Jason in *Plans for Departure* tells his wife Gayatri, are hard to find in the day-to-day actual life, and are only the things of imaginary, miraculous dream world. What is

striking in this regard is that these happenings of the fantasy-like world could happen in India in 1929-1930. Nayantara Sahgal was fully aware of this and knew that she fantasized love-relationships, which were not likely to occur in the late 1920s. And this is evident from her remark, " It is highly unlikely. Today it might happen, but not in 1929-30", made in reply to Jasbir Jain's question during an interview, "Would you say this can happen in real circumstances in India today" ("Establishing Connections: Interview with Nayantara Sahgal" 175). Upon this, Jasbir Jain rightly and logically comments that this only indicates "an emotional possibility — in a way, a fantasy", and further conclusively observes that the novelist has used a lot of fantasy in her novels. And Nayantara fully agrees with it by saying "Of course" (175).

As pointed out earlier, the focus of the narrative is on a social revolution against the political background of the events like the Khilafat Movement, the Dandi Salt Movement, etc.. The revolutionary social movement is effected by Bhushan, having fallen in love with a Muslim girl named Razia that caused two Hindu-Muslim riots at Vijaygarh, the birth-place of Bhushan who is the son of the *rajah* of the place. Bhushan, the protagonist, was seventeen when he had to be sent to America because of a Hindu-Muslim riot, resulting from his love for Razia. He is twenty-nine when back to India he lands at the Bombay dock and is arrested as a conspirator against the British Excellency. The novel is a bewitching tale of his love-adventures or better misadventures as none of the three fructify in marriage. Of course, there are references to the past events preceding these events and their aftermath. The exploits of the martyrs of freedom — of whom the one referred to in the novel is Azad — are nothing short of fairy-tales

The book opens with Bhushan talking with his neighbour in the Bombay hotel, a Turk who tells him about the revolutionary social changes among the Muslims in Turkey. The women could discard their burkas and roam about in the streets freely. It was a solacing good news for the love-sick Bhushan who from his landing at Bombay had started his love-knight's journey for Razia, not knowing that she had married a Muslim fellow of Turkish delegation and had left

India. Also, the readers are introduced to other nine prison mates of Bhushan, three of whom — Yusuf, Iyer, Pillai and Dey — are comrades and one Bhaiji, a Gandhite and Sen, a political worker. The atrocities and the misuse of power by the colonial rulers in India, and the overthrow of the Caliph of Turkey by Kemal Pasha outside India have been highlighted along with some other political events such as the Meerut conspiracy case, the Dandi Salt March, the Khilafat Movement, Hindu-Muslim riots in India and the rise of Communists in Russia.

On his travel from Bombay to Vijaygarh, Bhushan is arrested, the charge being "conspiracy to deprive the King Emperor of his sovereignty over India" (*Mistaken Identity* 13). One day, these prisoners read in the papers that the conspiracy prisoners in Lahore jail were on hunger strike and Jatin Das had died. Lajpat Rai had also died of his injuries. Azad had been hanged. After his release, when Bhushan comes to settle at Vijaygarh, he is overjoyed to campaign for opening Profullo Sen Centres for the young all over the province. Yusuf updates him on politics. It is on Yusuf's plan to make Vijaygarh an active participant in the country's struggle for independence for which he has bought a dilapidated property for his Profullo Sen Centre. Sitting on his balcony, Bhushan could see

> ...what she [the girl in love with him] couldn't see, the whole procession securely herded into the congested bazaar alley by mounted police armed with truncheons and batons, awaiting the signal to strike. Terror of a sort I had never felt, for people I didn't know, engulfed me. In minutes the horses rode through, truncheons hit heads and those who risked squeezing through the solid mass to the shops for shelter were crushed and flattened. And in minutes it was over, leaving trampled and suffocated bodies, some with bleeding skulls, in the alley. (193)

A part of the political happenings of the period was the Khilafat Movement. During a court trial scene, Bhaiji "Gandhi-*bhakt*" (128) and his so-called volunteers are held responsible for inciting the peasantry of this province to withhold the government's revised assessment of land revenue. Then there is the social revolution in Turkey closely related with a political crisis. The Turk tells Bhushan that in 1924 people had got rid of Caliph, in 1925 they had dissolved the religious orders, and in 1926 they had replaced the Sharia with

a western civil code. After his release from prison, Bhushan tells his mother that times are changing fast.

The great concern of Nayantara Sahgal in Indian context has been communal relationship between the Muslim and the Hindu residents of India. Ridiculous of the charges of insurgency, Bhushan questions Nauzer Vacha:

> Isn't politics the same as religion in this country? And aren't I up to my ears in religious intrigue? Does the court know, for example, that I was responsible - solely - for instigating a Hindu-Muslim riot in Vijaygarh in '9'7, and another in '9'8, the two most barbaric religious riots in forty years? (144)

And he had displeased Sylla's parents when in a Bombay meeting for collecting funds for Khilafat Movement on her insistence he read out his poem, "The Bridge" and then made a vehement oration against Hindu-Muslim communalism. Bhushan regarded Khilafat as "all nonsense" (116). At her insistence, Bhusan read aloud his poem, the inspiration for which had been Razia. In a prayerful mood he read the whole poem and then remarked: "I challenged them to extricate my Hindu from my Muslim self, if they could. And then I gave a clarion call for Hindu–Muslim marriage. Sexual unity was the acid test of unity" (119). The rulers in India had used Hindu-Muslim issue as a live wire. Mother's theory bears testimony to it:

> My mother was convinced it was the Commissioner who was delaying my passport on purpose, hoping my presence in Vijaygarh would start another riot. She didn't trust him. She called him a mischief-maker. Her theory is the British need a Hindu-Muslim riot now and then. No riot, no raj. (92)

As in other novels, in this novel, too, gender or man–woman relationship with love, sex and marriage has drawn Nayantara's serious thought. Bhushan, the hero of the novel, begins as a lover and finally succeeds in having wedlock with a girl of his mother's choice after his three failures — with Razia, with Willie-May and with Sylla. Once he had seen Razia on her way to the Female College and had a glimpse of her face, he started visiting the Muslim Mohallah. As a result, there was a terrible riot, and Bhushan had to be deported. In America he had his second love affair with Willie-May, the daughter of his father's friend. She and her father Goldberger wanted Bhushan to choose studio career in America. Since Bhushan would not stay and choose studio career, the love-affair ended with

Bhushan's return to Vijaygarh.

Before he could reach Vijaygarh, he happened to meet Sylla, his third love. She forced him (her Jumbo) to stay for ten days in Bombay and made him play a part in her drama version of *The Scarlet Letter*, being staged for three days to collect money for lady Daruvala's combined charities. Sylla was a commandeering woman. He played his role in the first performance and before the end of which he left without informing Sylla. However, the affair is resumed after three years when Bhushan is out of jail. Towards the end of the novel, Bhushan's meeting with her is quite moving. Earlier, Sylla had called Bhushan a 'raving lunatic' and 'a Narcissist' suffering from 'nympholepsy,' when after his release, he started scouring Kamatipura, the red-light area of Bombay looking for Razia. When Bhushan was for the last time at Sylla's, he had received a warm welcome by her parents, but Sylla was not at home. Later on, when she got out of a taxi, she said pitifully in a hushed voice: " 'Jumbo! Oh, my poor Jumbo!' Her whisper had the frenzy of a cry" (185). All old questions stood answered, but now astonishing questions appeared:

> At last we took our trembling hands from one another and drifted into calm, strong, permanent waters. Sylla's head was on my shoulder and I had never known such peace.
>
> She spoke first, despairingly. 'You do see why we can't marry, don't you, Jumbo?' (185)

Of the three love relationships that Bhushan has, it is in the one with Razia that he sees from the very outset the realisation of his complete self, his final fulfilment. He takes several years to comprehend the reality that her face has haunted him because it "defied unwritten laws.... It was this manifest racial impurity, a mix belonging to a vision of future communal union, that made it unforgettable, and retreat impossible for me" (49). Inevitably, he is in continuous search of her like a lunatic. In fact, he is obsessed with the vision of future embedded in communal union, and is undoubtedly a dreamer who, in the words of lawyer Vacha who pleads his case during the trial, is endowed with a "poet's vision of a realm where all gods are one. I would go further and say he dreams of a dawn when there will be no dividing characteristics of race, colour,

feature, worship left on the earth" (151). This amply reveals the essence of his real being — his indulgence in fantasy, dreams, visions and miracles.

The element of fantasy is further presented through Comrade Yusuf who, besides being a practical communist, is a dreamer also. He gets the flowerbeds dug and makes the children bring river water from a distance of one mile. The result is the miracle of the replacement of the imbecile's house by a monument to Sen, and thus he realises his deeply cherished dream. Then, in prison he dreams of a machine civilisation in India, a paradise for his countrymen, the description of which is worth citing here:

> The comrades' India is going to be forged out of steel, concrete and electricity, glorified by nuts and bolts. Men will make love to throbbing machine parts. Machines will shiver, groan and respond. The sun will be made of molten metal, the stars of iron and steel. Machine-tool grease and factory smoke will perfume the air. It seems entirely possible that men and women will turn into machines. To each his own paradise. (70)

It is, indeed, a miracle that a dreamer of materialistic world is miraculously transformed into an artist by his love affair with the *ranee* and lives in the fantasy world of woman's beauty and love: "He's like a modern artist with a mania for the angles and contours of a woman's body, right side up and upside down, curled up, stretched out, with one colossus of a breast or three little pointed ones in a row. Yusuf is that being, lost, found, surrounded and submerged. Great love is a serious, whole-time business" (194).

As pointed out at the very beginning of this paper, Nayantara Sahgal portrays in this novel a fantasy world of social freedom in which an individual can live a life of genuine fulfilment, of the true realisation of his real self, and of a true union of political and religious convictions. The novelist accomplishes this through a woman and her son, the *ranee* of Vijaygarh and her thirty-two year old son Bhushan. Apparently, Bhushan is the protagonist-narrator of the tale, but the really unique creation is the *raneee* and hence she is the most significant figure of the fantasy world of radical social change, particularly in regard to man-woman relationship, while her son lives amidst the political and social changes, and thus the novelist effects the blending of realism and fantasy. Both the characters are

given to dreams and rebellion.

The narrator's mother is, indeed, a bold woman, a social rebel of extraordinary guts. Married at the age of five, this middle-aged queen, notwithstanding the apparent fulfilment in worldly terms, lives a life of utter dissatisfaction and unfulfilment till towards the end of the narrative she leaves the prison-like palace for seeking fulfilment and inner peace in the arms of Comrade Yusuf, whose daughter, to her great joy, her son loves passionately. All her life with her husband Raja Sahib, she is denied freedom and fulfilment. She, like several of Nayantara Sahgal's female characters, illustrates artistically the writer's candid confession: "In a sense writers write about the same thing all their lives though they may hang that theme on different frame works. My on-going theme would probably be freedom" ("Passion for India," *Indian Literature* 83). An embodiment of inner drive for change, she is out and out a rebel, questioning everything that hampers freedom, and hence she is endowed with the modern woman's characteristic virtue, to quote Nayantara's own words, "courage which is willingness to risk the unknown and to face the consequences" (84). Small wonder she thoroughly disapproves of her husband's continual pursuit of sexual pleasures and new wives. She is an incarnation of modern enlightened woman who refuses to be considered as merely, to quote the words of Nayantara Sahgal, a "sex object and glamour girl, fed on fake dreams of perpetual youth, lulled into passive role that requires no individual identity" ("Women: Passions and Possessions," *The Hindustan Times*, July 19 1970). An inveterate seeker of freedom and fulfilment, she fully understands her son who pines for freedom of choice and fulfilment because of the tyranny of circumstances and the strictness of his dominating father. That is why, her son proclaims: "Mother was the only person who didn't think there was anything wrong with me (*Mistaken Identity* 147). The cry of her inner being, given to emancipation, is most appropriately described in the concluding paragraph of the novel, showing clearly that at last she is able to find herself by abandoning her narrow prison-like existence:

> Early one morning she left the family mansion. I saw her hesitate for a second at the entrance and hold her breath before she walked out to star

> in the most sensational scandal of the generation. Society has not forgiven this liaison between an illiterate ranee and her communist lover, and the shameless public exhibition they make of it. But Mother and Yusuf are so love-mad, they haven't noticed their notoriety. I can't say any of it surprises me as far as Mother is concerned. As I said, this is the Ganges heartland where we breathe the air of miracles. Besides, I've known this woman since she was twenty-two, and sentenced to that greenish light of unfulfilled desire. I couldn't have guessed she'd escape it, but before long I was sure no sun would have the nerve to melt her if she did. It is Yusuf whose capacities I never suspected.... He won't go high in the party hierarchy now. He'll stay where he is, at the middle rungs. And Mother won't care. With money, manners, and lineage, who needs a job? Mother is extremely vague about his job. She knows nothing about communism but she knows a man when she embraces one. This winter they'll be in Leningard where she'll see falling snow. (193-94)

Through this *ranee*'s outright rejection of her domineering and pleasure-seeking husband, Nayantara gives an artistic expression to her well-founded belief in gender equality, no matter the whole presentation is enwrapped in fantasy and make-belief: "... the most ancient power-structure in the world is that of male domination. All power-structures are very self-protective — especially if they feel threatened. Take the question of 'suffrage'. What a threat it was for the father and the husband as the dominant figures in the family. This is not a battle of a man against woman. It is a battle between those who believe in an equal society and those who don't. Definitely it is becoming a more permissive society and I am all for it..." ("Writer at Work" Interview by V. Mohini, *The Literary Criterion* 64-5).

This middle-aged *ranee* has in her the seeds of a rebel right from the beginning and has been craving for freedom from the old rotten ties and confinement in the suffocationg palace for decades. But she is depicted to have achieved this a little too suddenly and unexpectedly in the closing paragraph of the narrative — she leaves the palace once for all with her Muslim lover Comrade Yusuf and intends to go to Leningard in the coming winter to enjoy snow-storm to fulfil her long-cherished desire, leaving her son in the permanrent company of his mistress Razia, the daughter of Yusuf. This ending, entrenched in fantasy, is certainly very abrupt and hence gives a jolt to the reader and breaks the 'emotional continuity' of the narra-

tive. All this does not happen steadily and convincingly, and therefore this fairy-like, strange ending in just one paragraph, cannot be said to be the logical conclusion of the narrative running over 194 pages. The novelist's argument in defence of this ending, offered to Jasbir Jain's question in this context, is unconvincing and feeble:

> It worked out like this since there is a certain tide — there's a tide flowing. You can't stop it in the middle and turn it left or right, it's got to go in the direction in which it is going. I didn't know that this woman is going to liberate herself. Iwas very agonised when I say all this, I'm not being affected, it is not affectation. I have now come to understand what Faulkner meant when he made the statement " I have had a hard time running after my characters, keeping up with them." I have now come to understand it since the last three books which I have written. This is what I am doing — I'm keeping up with them. I didn't know I felt agony for this woman brought as a bride with her twin sister at the age of thirteen in horrendous circumstances. Heaven knows she may have lost children which may have been buried, girl-children. She had been through agony and and had no life. She was gasping for oxygen, as it were, in purdah. But her mind was free and she consulted these yogis and she, you know, lived her life. (Jasbir Jain, "Establishing Connections: Interview with Nayantara Sahgal," *Nayantara Sahgal* 174-75)

Nayantara Sahgal is right when she points out, quoting Faulkner in this connection, that quite often a fictional character runs away with the narrative and it becomes very difficult for the writer to keep pace with him/her. But it does not justify the case under discussion; the novelist should have written a few paragraphs here and there to give an indication of the key scene put in the concluding paragraph of the book. Even the novelist's further attempt to defend the last act of the *ranee*, who has little education and understanding of Communism, is weak to convince us: "... I longed for her to be free but I didn't know she would free herself. When she freed herself, it had to be. It could not be that she stayed behind in the dark and remain buried there" (175). We reject it by reiterating that the writer should have added some dialogues and scenes to foreshadow the conclusion. Jasbir Jain, a perceptive academic-critic, painstakingly endeavours to demonstrate the ending as logical and infers that "the ending which appears at first glance to be an indulgence in fantasy, a kind of an afterthought thrown in, is a natural move towards a

logical conclusion. it brings out the meaning of the narrative, and of the myth which is central to it.... With this ending the novel is no longer about Bhushan, but about his Mother; it is no longer about the past but about the future. There are many like Bhushan and his mother who need to be liberated from mistaken identities in order to find their true selves" (159). But even this learned critic questions the appropriateness and validity of this kind of ending when she argues with Nayantara during an interview with her: "It is possible to have several kinds of endings. Would you not say that the mother doesn't get married. Bhushan could go away, leave the country, these possibilities exist" (174)?

The ending is examined here in some detail because the element of fantasy in the book reaches its culmination in it. Unfortunately, the novel is not open-ended which could have made it more effective artistically like Henry James's great fictional work, *The Portrait of a Lady*; it has a conclusive ending which, in my considered opinion, is its glaring weakness. However, despite all this, the book, as is evident from the above detailed analysis of it, offers us an interesting blending of realism and fantasy, though it misses a true fusion of the two: the two strains have not been interwoven artistically in the texture of the narrative. The only saving grace of the novel is the optimistic, futuristic vision that it embodies, although it looks much ahead of the time, something belonging to the fantasy world.

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DEMYSTIFICATION OF VALUES AND CULTURAL CONFIGURATION IN GIRISH KARNAD'S *WEDDING ALBUM*

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Girish Karnad in his recent play, *Wedding Album* (2009), makes a subtle movement from his earlier techniques of the theatrics and dramatics for unfolding the social issues and cultural configurations as the process of self-discovery. He at the same time makes an application to theatrical motifs for defining the self-referentiality of relational values. The play, *Wedding Album,* moves around the family of a Saraswat Brahmin from South India. The issues such as the changing values of society, financial difficulties in marriageable acts and the transnational and transcultural concerns recurrently occur in the play. The fibrous motif at the centre of this play deals with an appropriation of the ideologies that are meant for arranging the wedding ceremonies. The relational bonds and the socio-psychological considerations are so set in the structural design as they seemingly bring into being the toxigenic effects on the customs and traditional values of society.

The play begins with the possibilities and limits of relationships in the marriage of Ashwin and Vidula. Ashwin as an expatriate staying in USA finds the high tech world of the West and the evil practices of Indian society detrimental to the development of relations; he himself denies any dowry in his marriage. For maintaining an integral unity of various dramatic events and their causative effects therein, the dramatist brings into being his structural techniques when he lets the audience know that scene one and scene five take "place about three years after the rest of the play" (Girish Karnad, *Wedding Album* 1). Rohit as the camera man is engaged in making the documentary of Vidula for showing it on T.V. screen. Again the theatrical device of curtain for stage directions has been replaced by the invisible form of the person who shoots the scenes. Not at her ease while facing camera in the studio, Vidula has been directed by Rohit that she should seemingly appear more confident than her usual talk in her speech acts on T.V. screen.

Thus, this interview of Vidula is arranged for introducing her to the person with whom she wishes to marry. Vidula introduces herself on T.V. Screen thus:

> I am Vidula. Vidula Nadkarni. I am twenty. Twenty-two and half actually. I have done my B.A. in Geography. Passed my exams last year. I am not doing anything at the moment. Worked for a travel agency for six months. (5)

The dramatist, apart from the introduction of Vidula and Rohit, introduces two new characters in this scene: Pratibha Khan and Rohit's girl friend, Isabel, a Catholic by religion.

The speech acts of the professional abilities make Pratibha think seriously about the relational values of life when she reveals her acquaintance with Isabel Pinto and she also ascertains the friendship between her and Rohit. In a reactive make-up, Rohit admits his relational fact thus: "We were almost engaged. And suddenly she broke it off" (60). The main thing that comes out in their dialogic mode is the opening of the folio-pages of Pratibha's life and of her marriage with a Muslim youth, Irfan Khan:

> Rohit I am forty. I am from Orissa. I came to Bangalore for reasons of my own and built up my business. Three years ago, I married a man ten years my senior. A Muslim. I married him when the anti-Muslim riots were at their worst. Because he offered me affection and security. (61)

The dramatic and performing motifs make a shift from the range of memories to the realistic view that extends from scene two to scene nine except the five one. The narrative inside these core scenes moves around the following characters: Vidula, Rohit, Pratibha, Tapasya and the entire family of Nadkarni. The inclusion of new characters is made for experimenting the postmodern aspects of garishly maintained life, psychological traits of human personality and above all the cultural configurations that exist in our ancient social system for the sacred rites of marriage. Scene two takes place in the house of Nadkarni. The preparations of the marriage in the house are at work. All characters are discussing the issues about the marriage and about the panics a government servent undergoes due to financial problems, the proper schooling and higher education of their children.

The psychological issues are presented through the conversation between the adolescent Vivan and a matured lady, Hema. The

moment Vivan gives back the novel of Hema, he also informs her about the letter which he has placed inside the book. Hema has a son older than Vivan, but when she opens the letter of Vivan, she is surprised to see its contents: "Darling, you don't know how I desire to crush you in my arms" (19). Karnad analyses this case in some details in scene four. Vivan gives a letter to Hema, but she denies to have any letter from him with the remark: "stop it, Vivan. I have got a son older than you" (44). Out of her fear psychosis, Hema regards this nonsense of Vivan as "filth", and in harsh words she warns him that she will inform his mother about it. But the reply of Vivan becomes an example of adolescent sexuality:

> Go ahead. I'll tell her I love you. The moment I saw you the other day, I fell desperately in love. I want to die kissing you. I want to die with my hand inside your blouse....(45)

Hema slaps him. The comment at the instance of stage Manager from behind the curtain shows the process of mental scanning related to the working of the psychogenic traits in the personality of Hema:

> Hema hurriedly glances through the letter and a blush spreads on her cheeks. She smiles to herself as she shoves the two letters into her handbag, then takes them out, folds them carefully, and puts them inside her blouse. (45)

The electronic devices such as video conferencing, email, mobile, telephones, internet and such others have frequently assume the bodily form of the text of this play for ceremonizing the marriage between Vidula and Ashwin. Moreover, Ashwin as a free thinker does not like to follow the traditional pattern of marriage; he just wants to get the marriage registered in the registrar office. This angers the mother of Vidula and she uses such lexicons which show the traditional and post-modernist viewpoints:

> Mother (*enraged*): Then why is he coming even a week in advance? Why not on the morning of the wedding? Tell him that they have seen each other on the video. Talked on the mobile. Why meet at all beforehand? They can be introduced to each other in the Registrar's office. (25)

Structurally, the narrative comes to a change in scene three which brings the audience to the living room of Nadkarni's house. The scene also includes three new characters: Ramdas, Gopal and Tapasya. Gopal and Tapasya, father and daughter, come to the house of Nadkarni for the proposal of marriage with his son, Rohit.

Nadkarni talks of the choice of modern young men and brings to light the fact that Ashwin Panje, a boy to be married to his daughter, Vidula, shows his reluctance to any kind of present and dowry. The father quotes his words: "Who says today's youth lacks values? Idealism? the first thing he said was: no, thanks. I don't want any dowry"(31). However, initially Rohit denies the proposal of Tapasya but on the persuasions of her father he feels inclined to accept it. Gopal, her father, lets him know about Tapasya's qualifications and implores: "Don't insult her. Don't please. I'll fall to your feet" (39).

Girish Karnad maintains the structural coherence when he arranges a scene where Vidula has been shown in a dark video-room making conversation about her marriage. With the facilities of sound and hearing, the small room of Internet Cafe is meant for "private viewings" (63). The theatrical and performing motifs are skillfully employed by the dramatist for analysing the innermost regions of human psyche. Here, the dramatist follows the technique of *Broken Images* wherein one sees the electronic device for analysing the self of Manjula Nayak. In this play, he manages an auditory but bodyless being (*Ananga*) for the theatrical devices. The voice with its acoustic frequency and audible vibrations makes Vidula reveal the inner most secrets of her life; the voice enquires about her place. At the same time,, it confesses its sentiments of love to Vidula, "Why have you made me wait?"(64). The dialogic mode between Vidula and voice becomes reflective of the three specific features related to the conditions of women as group: the dependence of relationships, woman as discursively constructed group and woman as material subjects of their own history. Women have always remained as 'other' who have been victimized sexually, politically and socially. They have not allowed to share the sense of plurality in society. The reply of Vidula to the voice seemingly appears an appropriate example of woman as 'other' even in the decolonized society of India. Vidula in her conversation with the voice confesses: "I have been sold off" (64), and this confession fully brings out the pitiable condition of woman as 'other'. She again lets the voice know about her poignant and heart rending conditions as a woman: "I told you I am a kept woman. Kept by a trader. I am his concubine.

Maintained by a man much older than me" (64). As a saleable commodity, woman becomes an object of exploitation to man. With no sentiment of 'fibbing' Vidula admits the dark scene of her life and the flagrant realities of society:

> He is dying.... His family is bound to throw me out. So I had to find a new master. A younger man. He lives in the U.S. He has paid good price to my family. (64)

In accordance with the social contexts, Vidula says to the voice that she now remains in search of an another young man with whom she can live in security. The enquiry of the voice about her personal life shows the colonial reflections in the text when the voice says, "Jeezus! These things still happen in India? What a country" (65)! The punctuated rhythm with a question mark is administered by an adverb "still" which reminds one the colonial oppression of the ruler to the subjects, but the use of adverb "still" before the verb "happen" changes the meaning of India as an independent nation. The male voice asks her address with a promise, "I'll come and buy you" (65). The mutual dialogic process between Vidula and the voice brings into light the changing values of society. The emotion of disgust can be perceived in the articulation of the words of voice when it replies to Vidula about its love to her: "First I'll strip you. Then I'll rape you" (65). The voice does not stop here in its furious remark and goes ahead when it says, "I'll kill you and cut you up" (65).

They both hear commotion outside during their conversation. There come two Hindu vigillantes who look after the causes for safeguarding Indian culture and moral values. One of the youths recognizes Vidula and advises her to leave the Café. The youth who recognizes her is of her caste — Sâraswat Brahmin. When the attendant of Vidula informs them about payment she has made for this video-game, the youths scold him and warn him for polluting the thoughts of young girls: you bastard, you show porno films to our Hindu women" (69)! They at the same time discuss the points that she is a disgrace "to our ancient Indian culture"(69). One of them, however, favours her because of their caste similarity. But another reminds him that they have taken an oath to save the culture instead of saving any caste.

With no flippant attitude, Vidula reacts against their advice and shows her real nature as a woman. She moves quickly in taking appropriate steps for her defence. She puts up a question before them; "I'll say what the hell I like. Why are you here" (70). She accuses of these youths as "fucking rapists" (71). Out of her anger, she holds the attendant in her confidence and surpasses all the limits of human behaviour: "You saw it with your own eyes. They pulled away my *dupatta*. You saw it - they tried to molest me. The bastards. I was playing games in the cubicles outside. They dragged me here. They tore my clothes. Help" (71). But the attendant assures her that these playfully annoying youths are interested only in collecting money instead of safeguarding the cultural norms of the country.

The culture developed under the compulsive-restrictive conditionings of high tech society has destroyed the natural bonds of relationships. The blind race after money and unbridled range of human desires have created a limbo and a space in relational values. The following extract from the text exhibits the disinterestedness and emotional vacuum even in blood relations; and perhaps this is the most horrifying aspect of postmodern literature:

> He had three sons in the US. His kidneys packed up, he was on the deathbed. So, the first son took leave and came. Waited for a month. But Phadnis wouldn't die. So the son went back. Next time Phadnis was critical, the second son came and waited. Used up his holidays. But Phadnis wouldn't oblige. The third son apparently told his mother, 'If father does not die now, I can't come back for two years. I have promised my wife and children a holiday in the Maldives next year. (78)

The influence of the West can also be perceived on the conversation that takes place between Vidula and her betrothed, Ashwin. Ashwin, a software Engineer in USA, has earned money more than his requirement, but he at the same time confesses the loss of social and moral values, cultural and spiritual insight and the racial and ethnographic roots because of his stay in European countries. So, what he desires in his marriage is a girl who comes from the culturally-rich background of India. He does not make any demand of dowry but demands a girl with culturally cognized behaviour which can relieve him of his tension-tormented soul:

> I am passing through a spiritual crisis. I am boiling inside like a volcano. I want you to share my agonizing search of myself. It will require an intellectual effort to understand the real me. It may even require an emotional giving-up. If you agree to marry me, you will have to share my inner turmoil. (79-80)

The loss of moral and cultural values make Ashwin an agonized being; and this agonizing search for the real "me" does not exhibit the motifs of pleasure-loving instincts in the ceremony of marriage, but it becomes a distressing effort for experiencing the real identity of man.

Thus, Ashwin Panje in the play experiences the loss of his identity and feels deserted inspite of all the pleasures and luxuries of life. The reason of his inner turmoil is not far to seek; it lies in the empty and meaningless values of life:

> And I have come to the conclusion that that whole culture is empty of values, now, bereft of any living meaning. It is shallow.....The European Industrial Revolution began by reflecting religion in favour of material values. But today that legacy is strangling the West. They have no spiritual moorings left. They are adrift in a godless, amoral world. (80)

Ashwin talks of the Industrial Revolution and reveals the material dialectics of history wherein one sees the dominance of material principles. Human life beyond its material representation is meant for the higher spiritual principles. This shows that the ideologies of life maintained by the West are cut off from the higher principles of religion (*Dharma*). Ashwin uses the modified form of the verb, strangle as "strangling" for displaying the thought process of the Europeans. These situational and contextual realities beget in him the sense of isolation and alienation. As a philosopher, he thinks: "what am I ? Where am I. I looked to India for guidance" (81). However, he is not a pessimist; he is an optimist and at the instance of an Indian rishi, he is of the opinion that it is Hinduism which will guide the rest of the world:

> I have realized that Hinduism can indeed save this world from the moral chaos but not through this sort of branded spirituality. No dial-a-solution philosophy is going to keep the world. We have to look into our hearts, and discover our ancient values afresh. Begin at the beginning. (81)

These are the philosophic ideologies that make him come to Dharwad for choosing an innocent girl as his life partner. So, he has set some conditions for his marriage. He thinks that if there is any girl of his

idea — "Woman as Mother, Wife, Daughter. Womanhood as the most sacred Ideal" (81) — , he will marry her.

Ashwin does not approve or disapprove the legitimacy of any system either in India or in America. He suggests Vidula that there are many good things that can be learnt from the West for the progress of life but the blind adherence to any such practice cannot be in the interest of man and his spiritual progress. He desires to marry a girl who can associate her spiritual self to his onward move. So finally, he puts a condition before Vidula about his marriage:

> I want you to see this not merely as a marriage but as a mission. I would like you to be my partner in carrying the best of our spiritual tradition to the West and save the West. Yes, I am not ashamed or afraid to say it – save it. (82)

What one sees in the dialogic mode between Ashwin and Vidula is being missed at the house of Nadkarni. They regard marriage as the gambling in life and Rohit advises Vidula if there goes anything wrong bettween her and Ashwin, she can divorce him, and can come back to the family. But Vidula has understood Ashwin and she promises her brother: "I'll never divorce him" (86). The mother advises her not to waste time in domestic affairs like her.

Thus, the play ends where it begins: the cheerful and happy mental states of the members of the family. There remains a space between scene one and scene nine. Karnad evinces his dramatic skill by displaying the various issues in this space such as the problems of domestic affairs, relational values within the family and outside it, the sentiments of perversion and the use of tradition for revealing the contemporary features of literature. As a dramatist, he makes a movement away from the world of the scriptural myth and the historical narratives. The play is, indeed, successful in showing temporal aspects and spiritual experiences, national and transnational issues, and finally the motifs of theatrics and the principles of dramaturgy.

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NARRATION OF NATION IN AMITAV GHOSH'S *THE SHADOW LINES*

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The politics of nation has always served as a trigger to the creative imagination of an artist. It goes without saying that the novelists of the third world have creatively used the theoretical assumption of the nation in order to see how the contours of nationality determine the socio-cultural and socio-economic life of those countries who have suffered the pangs of colonial/postcolonial trauma. Amitav Ghosh is no exception and his fictional work can be read as a telling comment on the role of nation/nationality in the life of individual/individuals which are the pillars of socio-political structure of a given society. The narrator in his fiction is always conscious of his own identity as well as the identity of others who belong to different nations. In other words, it can be said that the identity of a particular nation moulds/re-moulds the personality of an individual.

Divided into two parts 'Going Away' and 'Coming Home', *The Shadow Lines* travels through three nations — India, England and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The aim of this paper is to explore Amitav Ghosh's narration of nation through three major characters — Tha'amma, Ila and the unnamed narrator. While Tha'amma has a militant belief in nation like many people in today's world who indulge in mad terrorism and communal violence for independent nation, Ila has a cosmopolitan belief like many contemporary youth who break the barriers of political nations for a world of freedom. The narrator has a sceptical belief in political lines differentiating one nation from another. Tha'amma's aggressive nationalism, Ila's aggressive internationalism and the narrator's preoccupation with shadow lines and his belief in integrative nationalism dominate the structure and texture of the narration of nation in *The Shadow Lines*.

The narrator's grandmother, Tha'amma, had to take up a school teaching job, after her husband's premature death in order to educate her only son. Like a proud woman, she refused help from relatives, even from her rich sister. Though she dreamt of partici-

pating in nationalist movement in Dhaka in early twenties, while she was in college and would have done anything for freedom, yet she hates the refugees flooding Calcutta and snaps at the comparison "We're not refugees...we came long before partition."[1]

For Tha'amma 'nation' refers to the political state and "to something more ancient and nebulous — the 'natio'-...domicile, family, condition of belonging...is radically connected with 'native'. We are born into relationships which are typically settled in a place."[2] Tha'amma and her younger sister Maya grew up in a palatial house in Dhaka inhabited by many branches of the family. After her grandfather's death, the house was divided into two exact halves. Although they were not on speaking terms, yet their aunt played a central role in arranging Mayadebi's marriage to the Shaheb. After marriage, the cousins drifted to various parts of the subcontinent, leaving only the four elderly people in the house — her uncle, her aunt and her parents. The ancient bitterness had not diminished with time and so even after their parents' death, Tha'amma is not able to go across and talk to her uncle and aunt because the house was so full of painful memories and she fled back.

One day she meets an old acquaintance Minadi who informs her that her cousin, one of her Jethamoshai's son, lives right here in Calcutta. She immediately plans to visit them. Everybody is surprised at this sudden onrush of family feeling, the missionary warmth for the children of a man whom her parents hated. Though her cousin has passed away, his wife tells Tha'amma that her Jethamoshai is still living in the old house in Dhaka which has now been occupied by refugees from India. Tha'amma is shocked. "Poor old man...Imagine what it must be like to die in another country, abandoned and alone in your old age"(149). She declares in her soft and dreamy voice: "There's only one worthwhile thing left for me to do for my life now.... And that is to bring the old man home...And her eyes grew misty at the thought of rescuing her uncle from his enemies and bringing him back where he belonged, to her invented country" (151).

As luck would have it, Mayadebi's husband, the Shaheb is appointed the Counsellor in the Deputy High Commission in Dhaka

and Mayadebi invites Tha'amma to Dhaka. Tha'amma can vividly recollect Dhaka in her memory all through her life, yet when she finally makes a visit to Dhaka, she is at a loss. Homi K. Bhabha's comment on the sustained period of mass migration within the west is relevant to understand the enigma of Tha'amma. "The nation fills the void left in the uprooting of communities and kin, and turns that loss into the language of metaphor. Metaphor, as the etymology of the word suggests, transfers the meaning of home and belonging...."[3] Two thoughts gravely perplex Tha'amma — one the lines which divide a nation; two her new status in Dhaka. Borders puzzle Tha'amma. Would she be able to see it from the plane? Not a school atlas division but something — "trenches perhaps, or soldiers, or guns pointing at each other, or even just barren strips of land...no-man's-land"(167)?

She is shocked at the prospect of filling the disembarkation cards as she would have to fill Dhaka as her place of birth — "and at that moment she had not been able to quite understand how her place of birth had come to be so messily at odds with her nationality"(168)? Earlier she could always 'come home to Dhaka' but now she was a foreigner. The narrator observes that people, who have no home but in memory, learn to be very skilled in the art of recollection. Tha'amma's Dhaka had too long vanished into the past, and only the outlines of the image lived in her mind.

After staying in Mayadebi's house in Dhanmundi for a couple of days, they plan to visit their Jethamoshai in the heart of the old city inspite of warning of trouble in the Chancery. Robi remembers that Tha'amma changed her sari twice and teased her for being as anxious as a bride going home for the first time. She "retorted: You've got it wrong- I'm going home as a widow for the first time" (226). As soon as they crossed the bridge, suddenly the sights were falling into place like a stack of old photographs, the familiar signs and ultimately their house. With eyes misted she exclaimed, Jethamoshai "We've come home at last..." (234). But Jethamoshai has lost his sanity and he refuses to move. Jethamoshai, Khalil and Tridib lost their lives in the subsequent communal riots and a dejected Tha'amma donated her last piece of jewellery for the sake of freedom, took to

donating her blood, lost her peace of mind listening to the news on the radio all the time about war with Pakistan and ultimately had to be hospitalized.

Ila Datta-Chaudhari, free woman and free spirit, is a true cosmopolitan. For Ila the current was the real. She believed in the unity of nationhood and territory, in self-respect and a modern middle class life. For her morality could only be an absolute and prudishness, hypocrisy had no place in her judgment A globe trotter, the only grandchild of the Datta-Chaudhari family, Ila lives in London and comes to Calcutta for occasional holidays only. Her flat mates talked of her as 'our own upper-class Asian Marxist' and accepted in her the signs of cosmopolitanisms; perhaps they saw Ila as a link with the Fabians. Ila is shocked beyond words by Robi's conservative behaviour — his refusal to drink beer and visiting a nightclub Grand Hotel. He objects to Ila's dancing. To which Ila retorts that she chose to live in London because she wanted to be free, "free of your bloody culture and free of all of you" (98). But the narrator aptly comments: "You cannot be free of me because I am within you..." (98). But Tha'amma sums up Ila's precarious identity succinctly: "Ila has no right to live there...she doesn't belong there. It took those people a long time to build that country; hundreds of years, years and years of war and bloodshed.... They know they are a nation because they've drawn their borders with blood..." (85).

The Indian Grande-dame falls in love with Nick Price (who as a child had felt ashamed to be seen by his friends and school mates walking home with an Indian and who had run away instead of saving Ila from a racist attack in the lanes of West Hampstead). Ila-Nick marriage turns out to be a hackneyed Indian marriage — groom entrapping a rich heiress! Cracks appear in Nick-Ila marriage soon. "Could I have ever imagined, she said, that I, Ila Dutta-Chaudhari, free woman and free spirit, would ever live in that state of squalor where incidents in one's life can be foretold like teasers for a bad television serial"(206)? Inspite of her cosmopolitan veneer she is a typical Indian woman at heart. She is not able to get rid of the typical Indian mentality. The distinct features of the nation are an integral part of an individual's personality and it is also true that every nation

has its own distinct features which contribute to the shaping of the personality of its dwellers. She confesses to the narrator that "I only talked like that to shock you, and because you seemed to expect it of me somehow. I never did any of those things: I'm about as chaste, in my own way, as any woman you'll ever meet" (207). But she is a disheartened woman and " nothing would console her for the discovery that the squalor of the genteel little lives she had so much despised, was a part too of the free world she had tried to build for herself"(208).

The narrator of *The Shadow Lines* is influenced by Tridib throughout his life. He hero-worships Tridib and absorbs every word uttered by him. "Tridib had given me worlds to travel in...could never understand what those hours in Tridib's room had meant to me, a boy who had never been more than a few hundred miles from Calcutta...those names, which were to me a set of magical talismans because Tridib had pointed them out to me on his tattered old Batholomew's Atlas..." (22).The narrator believes that "a place does not merely exist, that it has to be invented in one's imagination" (23). Thus, it becomes clear that Amitav Ghosh seems to subscribe to the view of Timothy Brennan that nations are imaginary constructs that depend for their existence on an apparatus of cultural fictions in which imaginative literature plays a decisive role. Tridib wanted to teach him to use his imagination with precision and one could never know anything except through desire, " a pure, painful and primitive desire, a longing for everything that was not in oneself, a torment of the flesh, that carried one beyond the limits of one's mind to other times and other places, and even, if one was lucky, to a place where there was no border between oneself and one's image in the mirror" (32).

"Nations," says Homi K. Bhabha, "only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye."[4] Tridib, an archaeologist, was trying to teach the narrator that the cities one saw on maps were real places, not fairylands and he wanted to teach the narrator to use his imagination with precision because "we could not see without inventing what we saw..."(34). On his first visit to London, the narrator,is able to point out roads — West End Lane, Sumatra Road, Mill Lane,

Lymington Road, just out of his memory. The narrator easily leads them to 44, Lymington Road, Mrs Price's home. He easily remembers the cherry tree, the kitchen, the cellar etc shown years ago by Ila while playing Houses under the gigantic table in Ila's ancestral home in Raibajar in Calcutta. (This table, shipped from London in 1890s from an exhibition in the Crystal Palace by grandfather shocks May. Ila had drawn lines on the dust- that's the road outside, over there we play cricket. She had drawn squares, rectangles to left and right and pointed out rooms, windows, garden, kitchen, cellar, her room, Aunty Elisabeth's room, staircase leaving the narrator completely baffled. "I shook my head violently; something about those lines had begun to disturb me...I dropped to my knees and began to scrabble around in the dust, rubbing out lines...Frowning, I puzzled over the pattern in the dust" (77).

The narrator struggled with silence for fifteen years only to discover that there was a connection between his nightmare bus ride back from school, and the events that befell Tridib and others in Dhaka. As a child the narrator grew up believing in his perception of truth: "I believed in the reality of space; I believed that distance separates, that it is a corporeal substance; I believed in the reality of nations and borders; I believed that across the border there existed another reality. The only relationship my vocabulary permitted between those separate realities was war or friendship.... I could not have perceived that there was something more than an incidental connection between those events of which I had a brief glimpse from the windows of that bus, in Calcutta and those other events in Dhaka, simply because Dhaka was in another country" (241). Searching through the archives in the library, the narrator looks up the newspaper files for 1964 and comes across the edition of Friday, 10 January 1964 with headlines- Twenty nine killed in riots (in Khulna, in East Pakistan, across the border); edition of Saturday, 11 January 1964 with a huge banner headline- Curfew in Calcutta and Sacred relic reinstalled (the sacred hair of the Prophet, Mu-i-Mubarak, reinstalled in the Hazratbal shrine in Srinagar). This, the narrator calls the beginning of his strangest journey: "a voyage into a land outside space, an expanse without distances; a land of look-

ing glass event" (247).

Tridib's old Bartholomew's Atlas draws the narrator's attention. Picking a rusty old compass, with Khulna at the centre and Srinagar on the circumference, he draws an amazing circle on the map of Asia. So, fifteen years after Tridib's death, he still is the guiding force as the narrator tries to learn the meaning of distance. Drawing various circles, the narrator tries to comprehend the relationship between places and events. He is wonderstruck that until recently 'sensible people' of good intention

> had thought that all maps were the same, that there was a special enchantment of lines. They had drawn their borders, believing in that pattern, in the enchantment of lines, hoping perhaps that once they had etched their borders upon the map, the two bits of land would sail away from each other like the shifting tectonic plates...they had created not a separation, but a yet undiscovered irony –the irony that had killed Tridib: the simple fact that there had never been a movement in the four-thousand-year long history of the map, when the places that we know as Dhaka and Calcutta were more closely bound to each other than after they had drawn their lines- so closely that I, in Calcutta, had only to look into the mirror to be in Dhaka; a moment when each city was the inverted image of the other, locked into an irreversible symmetry by the line that was to set us free—our looking glass border. (257)

To conclude, the narrator realizes what Meenakshi Mukherjee sums as "identical realities across territorial borders which were originally meant to mark out differences, or across communities that are imagined to be different, reiterate the theme of the novel as spelt out in the title."[5] The narrator realizes that his family and even his social identity extend beyond the limitations of the distinct conventional national boundaries as expressed by Benedict Anderson. The shadow lines that mark borders are not mere physical reality. Borders are creations of mind, a mere artificial construct. It seems to mock the narrator's belief in the concept of exclusive national identity. Tha'amma, upright, moral, principled and intrinsically Indian, shows the narrator the dangers and the emptiness of warped notion of nationalism. Ila rejects her colonial past, her community, the cultural constraints of her national identity, and tries to embrace the world of colonizer. She reveals to the narrator the hollowness of the world of the deracinated. The narrator, culturally rooted in his

'soil, 'has worlds to travel in' in his imagination, understands the meaning of cultural dislocation and national identity. Robi, a minor character, teaches the narrator that western culture need not affect us. Born in postcolonial era, robi grows up with the attitude of a unitary identity as a citizen of independent, secular India, and does not have to confront the necessary fractured senses of self as those who experienced decolonization and partition. The senseless violence that kills Robi's brother Tridib and make him victim to mob fury becomes part of his identity as postcolonial Indian.

In other words, it can be said that the twin concept of homelessness and national identity are employed to understand the need of cultural relocation and its relevance in the contemporary world. In his book, *The Fateful Question of Culture*, Geoffery Hartman has a point when he says that "homelessness is always a curse."[6] In *The Shadow Lines* also Amitav Ghosh takes up the question of homelessness, cultural dislocation and relocation of the diasporic space in the light of the theoretical meaning of nation and how this affects the behavior of individuals in given circumstances. It will not be an exaggeration to say that narration of nation has been used as a framework/ as an alternative to the various varieties of national essences in order to highlight the complexity of the incongruities of nation/ narration of nation.

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ARAVIND ADIGA'S *BETWEEN THE ASSASSINATIONS* : A MULTI-COLOURED NOVEL IN EMBRYO

O.P. Mathur

Though Aravind Adiga's *Between the Assassinations*[1] was written earlier than *The White Tiger*[2], it was published later under the shadow of the 'Tiger' having won the Booker Award. This was unfortunate, for the 'Tiger's' glare tends to blind the reader to its sterling merits and multi-coloured potentiality. Though ostensibly only a group of stories, it has a multi-layered unity – the same locale of a small town named Kittur, situated between Goa and Calicut, its formal plan being that of a sort of a week-long visitor's handbook with unnecessary geographical details and introductions to certain other aspects of the town. But the work upsets the plan and goes far beyond it. The stories have a declared historical link of the period of seven years between 1984 and 1991, the tragic assassinations of Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv Gandhi. The link between the stories, avowedly "a time of extra-ordinary transformation,"[3] is actually shown almost as its opposite, with unfavourable opinion of the post-1947 politics (126, 134, etc.) as consisting of exploitation, communal and other types of violence, mishandling of foreign policy (240), etc., making a character going to the extent of saying, "Everything has been falling apart in the country since Mrs. Gandhi got shot .... We'll have to hand over this country back to the British or the Muslims or the Russians or someone, I tell you. We're not meant to be masters of our own fate, I tell you" (231). This is spoken, in spite of there being no reference to the Operation Blue Star or the massacre of the Sikhs after Mrs. Gandhi's assassination in the book. A character even denounces Rajiv Gandhi by saying, "I thought things would get better with this fellow Rajiv Gandhi taking over. But he has all let us down" (33). So many stray remarks by characters and their actions, as we shall see, may make us think whether the "extra-ordinary transformation" mentioned in the blurb was on the negative side. If so, the book provides possibly an unmeant unity — that of the realization of personal, social and political values by portraying their large scale, if not total, absence.

Another type of unity, possibly meant, is that of its artistic inspiration. Perhaps Murali of the last story 'Salt Market Village', who dreams of "becoming an Indian Maupassant", voices one of his creator's own dreams. Even now he seems to be so overpowered by his love for the French writer that even in his fifties he wants to marry a young girl so that if he cannot give her children at his age, he can at least giver her the pleasure of reading Maupassant together (275). Critics have noticed Maupassant's acute observation leading to his portrayal of the world "an inevitable progression of events and a unity of effect" by using his 'slick' technique which can be used to "conceal the real depth of penetration."[4]

Aravind Adiga's narrative camera moves at random taking snaps of a number of places in Kittur – the railway station, the bunder, Lighthouse Hill, two Christian schools, a cinema hall, the publishing house of a newspaper, a construction site, three private houses of Christians of different types, one house of a Brahmin, a market place, to mention only the more important ones. All these and other places are populated by a large and interesting variety of people making them Blake's grain of sand in which one can see a world containing, in addition to the local people, quite a few from other parts of the country, a Pakistani spy, a Gurkha guard and a lady who could possibly be British.

Within the broad parameters of geography and the self-impound time-frame, often ignored, that Adiga has through his characters highlighted the major concerns of the nation – religious, economic and social – often inter-connected because their roots are usually clustered in the fertile soil of politics, and hence their relevance goees beyond the seven-year period identified in the title. The people belong to three of the major religions of India – Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. The range of their social status is also wide – from the rich, filling their leisure with reading porn, to the poor who are not sure about their next meal and a small daughter of one of whom has to beg all day to get enough money to buy the daily dose of smack for her father. The professions of the people too are varied – Land-owners, teachers, bank officials, fake physicians, money-lenders, servants, etc. The relations of all these people to their different

situations are interestingly varied.

Religion is one of the factors that pervade the Indian life. Towards communal relations Adiga's attitude is firmly modern, i.e., favouring peace and harmony. Though he does not portray extremist Hindus or Muslims as such, he has a fling at those Muslims who drink and go on referring to Allah (27). He does refer to communal riots which are reported by a section of the press with a bias. It is truthful reporting that can identify real culprits and thus prevent the recurrence of such riots. Such a correct picture of a riot is presented by a brave and truthful journalist Gururaj to whom a Muslim thankfully says, "If more people did what you do, there won't be any more riots in the town" (117). 'Communal' riots are also sometimes used as a cover by land-sharks or property sharks to grab what they want – "real estate transaction masquerading as a riot" (126). As regards the ideal individual stance towards communalism, Adiga has presented a young Muslim boy Ziauddin with pristine innocence and always trying to avoid doing what he instinctively considers to be wrong, 'hanky-panky' as he calls it. He is unable to adjust with either the Hindus or the Muslims living on the two sides of the railway station. Nor does he indulge in the 'hanky panky' of spying on the movement of the Indian troops as required by a Pakistani. Ultimately he rightly finds himself to be an 'in-between' and becomes a porter at the railway station – neither on one side nor on the other, a symbol of total aloofness from communalism.

On the economic front, Adiga lays his finger on two major evils, almost irremediable. One of them, the pivot of *The White Tiger*, is the yawning and apparently increasing chasm between the rich and the poor. This unfortunate aspect is glaringly highlighted in 'The Cathedral of Our Lady of Valencia' (182-212) with the wealthy Mrs. Gomes, reading porn to pass time, exploiting her all-purpose servants like George, who too is summarily dismissed on mere suspicion and is made to move out, shelterless in the night along with his young sister, her cook (210-12).

Another evil widely prevalent and deeply entrenched is that of corruption upon which Adiga throws light in quite a few of the stories. In the story 'The Bunder' (24-42) portraying the pathetic fate

of complete blindness imposed upon a number of poor old women made to stitch minute and complicated designs in semi-darkness. The merchant Abbasi flourishes on "fine a spun cloth of corruption" (41) — bribing and sometimes threatening the government officers, especially of Income Tax Department. He is supported by his friends, mostly Muslims, who, outwardly condemning corruption, are themselves property-sharks making millions under the veil of communal riots or lending money at the killing rate of 3% compounded every month, making the lives of the poor needy borrowers miserable, leading some of them to suicide. In such a situation people can depend on only two institutions for remedy — the judiciary and the Press. Adiga has made no reference to the first, though the cancer of corruption has also allegedly entered, and as an eminent Judge of the Supreme Count has put it, there is no remedy to eradicate it.[5] In such a situation people can perhaps depend only on the Fourth Estate, the Press, for checking corruption and also for preventing communal riots (117). But the press too for its very survival depends on money which it can get only from rich companies, other private parties and also its owners (129), and therefore, it has sometimes in its own interest to misrepresent the truth like that of the traffic accidents, in which the driver takes the blame of the master (123), riots etc. (117-126). An honest journalist Gururaj in the story 'Angel Talkies' (134-138) is dismissed for telling the truth and is made literally to eat his copy of the paper by a young and ambitious journalist. A sick physician like the press can hardly cure the deep-rooted and widespread malady of corruption. Only a token upholder of the truth is successful on a minor matter – that of selling copies of Salman Rushdie's banned novel *The Satanic Verses*, and that too by moving from place to place. This only emphasises that the problem of the corrupt press remains.

As regards social relations, Adiga highlights the caste-system which has split the society into two main groups – the Brahmins and the Hoykas with their distinctive language Tulu. Their ill treatment by the Brahmins results in a feeling of rebellion violently expressed in the sotry 'Our School' (52-83) by the bursting of a bomb in a classroom by Shankara (who is considered a "monstrosity" because

of his being a half-Brahmin and half-Hoyka, thus rejected by both) as he says "to end the 5000-year old caste-system that operates in our country." The Brahmins are only 10% of the population, but the Hoykas too are divided into seven smaller castes, making a Professor comment, "This is the big problem with you Hindus. You are mysteries to yourself." (73). In another story 'Valencia: To the First Crossroad' 157-182) the Hindu caste system is presented from another interesting angle. A Hindu Brahmin woman is made to work from her early years as a maid servant in one family after another, some of them as also their other servants being Hoykas upon whom she looks down and grumbles at her fate. One of the families she serves happens to be a Christian one, and in the sub-conscious liking their freedom even to marry or divorce, she at heart wishes than that if she sins enough she may be born a Christian in her next birth (182). What a comment on Hindu society! Riddled with a complexity of feelings arising from her being a Brahmin, Jayamma is an immortal creation.

The author's stance in favour of modern values and ways of life is revealed in a number of other stories, perhaps most effectively in Lighthouse Hill ('The Base of the Hill' 84-112) the Assistant Headmaster of a school, D'Mello tries in vain to keep his students away from having a glimpse of the sexy scenes painted on the walls of a cinema house where the boys have to go to view a picture. He gets all the walls covered with cloth, but when the cloth is torn at one end by one of his own students, he rushes up, dizzy and with his chest burning, by chance rips open the cloth and the whole sexy cavalcade is flashed open seen by everyone, including D'Mello himself at last who now regretting all the "angelic delights" he had scorned, dies of heart attack caused by the physical exertion.

Though not a novel, *Between the Assassinations* presents a society that cuts across castes, religions, differences of wealth, power and moral or political beliefs and values. Having a rich commanalty of themes, it is capable of being the seed-bed of many novels, which it actually proved to be in the case of *The White Tiger*, taking up one of its many themes, the co-existence of extreme wealth and extreme poverty, of 'light' and 'darkness', which

is present explicitly or implicitly in quite a few of its stories. There are other themes also like contrast between the old values and the new on which a novel can be written. Or, alternately, they can all be accomodant in a comprehensive novel interpenetrating the themes.

Arvind Adiga like a true novelist has populated Kittur with various characters having a rich variety of their social and professional status, religious beliefs, economic activities, political views and values of life. But two or three factors permeate most of them – the vast chasm between the wealthy and the poor, corruption spreading its tentacles in most areas of life, and, above all, many of the characters having a subconscious existence of which they themselves are not aware and which are 'mysteries' to themselves (73), unexpectedly emerge, to the surprise of the readers and often of the characters themselves. To this category, as we have already noticed, belong characters like the boy Ziauddin whose non-communal stance (no 'hanky panky', as he often puts it), the rebellious feelings of a lower class Hoyka, resulting in his bursting in his class a bomb, regretted by himself later, a professional maid servant, proud of her being a Brahmin, yet acquiring an underlying appreciation for the freedom of the Christian way of life, a loyal and hardworking servant's sub-conscious attraction for his wealthy mistress, a fake drug-seller's softer feelings for a seriously ill youth whom he ultimately provides a shelter in his house, an Assistant Headmaster's regrettable dawn of the suppressed 'angelic' delights of sex at the very sunset of his life, a fifty-five year old comrade's desire to help a poor family veiling his underlying love for its young girl which, when rebuffed, makes him harm the family. The characters of *Between the Assassinations* are thus three-dimensional with a deeper core, unlike most of the characters of *The White Tiger*.

As regards the narrative technique, the framework of a seven-day tourists' visit is just a formality, for no tourist can see so much of Kuttur even if he is on his legs all day long and a penetration into the lives and characters of so many people is out of the question. In fact, the novelist's instinct of the writer has superseded the artificially imposed framework for the stories by an omnipresent, though

not omniscient, author who is, largely a keen watcher of the events and characters.

The narrator thus consists of two observers, the first and the third person, in a 'binary vision', funny at the surface level and pathetic at a deeper one. Its subject has been described as "he pathos, injustices and ironies of Indian life", giving rise to a thought on multifarious values in most of the stories, perhaps most directly in 'Bajpai' (234-50) in which the childless wife of a Bank Manager offers to buy, to the horror of her mother-in-law swim-suits for herself and her husband, which she ultimately does not. Her husband has a different set of values — love for his old private beach' (249), a small shore of a nearby lake, soon going to be converted into a Sports Stadium. His values for the old are dying while his wife's love for the swimsuits remains still-born. It is a complex world of compromise between old values and the new – a subject highly suitable as a theme in a novel of the complexity of the modern world which seems to be the focus of a novel of many colours – people, places, ways of life and thought, and values.

In its blurb, *Between the Assassinations* has been called "the moral biography of a town." The use of the word 'biography' is a little puzzling, for the book does not deal with the *history* of the life of the town. Perhaps the work may be better called an 'anatomy' of the town as also its 'physiology', for it identifies the important components of the life of the town and also the processes of their functioning which provide varied perspectives on the life in Kittur, and indirectly in India in general. There is an underlying dissatisfaction possibly resulting in pessimism arising from it which has been viewed by us in some detail. This partly seems to justify the title which shrouds the seven-year period within two gory poles. But Adiga often seems to veil his disappointment under fun and lightheardness of narration on the one hand, and in his faith in the characters' instinctive realization of 'what should be', leading them to self-correction on the other. This bilateralism in the book creates in the reader complex responses.

Perhaps Adiga could have fused the themes of various stories into a whole multifaceted picture of Indian life it would have been

a much greater novel than *The White Tiger.* Through the stories of the runs a unity of theme as noticed by a critic:

> Adiga's great theme is power relations – between rich and poor, master and servant, high caste and low caste, majority and minority – and, as a consequence of these relations, moral perversion and subaltern rage. A recurring gesture in them is one person bowing before another with folded hands.... Adiga's protagonists differ from each other on the scale of their reactions to a callous and perverted system... from resigned acceptance to, even complicity with, the established order, to seething impotence and maddening rage....[6]

The author's social and political stance pervades the work bringing it nearer a broad-based novel, ironically revealing the injustices, pathos and rage going much deeper into the complexities of Indian life than the monochromatic and hence much less nuanced, *The White Tiger* does. It is focused on an individual who speeds like an arrow towards his target, 'the world of light', largely without depths of dilemma, despair or regret. A critic's pithy comment on *Between the Assissinations*, therefore, seems justified: "In six words: more deserving than "Adiga's Booker clincher."[7] It may possibly be stretched as being a comparison between a formal novel and a potential one.

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[3]Blurb of *Between the Assassinations.* Back of the cover.

[4]Lilian Herlands Hornstein (Colvins S. Brown: General Editor), *The Reader's Companion to World Literature* (New York: Dryden Press, 1956), p.279.

[5]Justice Markandeya Katju, Quoted in the Hindi newspaper *Dainik Jagaran,* Varanasi edition (5 November, 2009), p. 2. Here is an English rendering of the quotation: "In India everybody is corrupt. This corruption can never be eradicated. It was just my feeling that I could correct the corrupt. But now I have come to realize that there is no way to correct them."

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MYTH AS A SYMBOL IN DEVDUTT PATTANAIK'S *THE PREGNANT KING*

R. Deepta

There has been a revival of the use of myth in Indian Fiction in English in the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty first, not just an image here and a symbol there but as an organizing principle of the narrative forming the basis for both content and form. Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel*, Arun Joshi's *The City and The River*, Gita Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* and *The Ghosts of Vasu Master*, Gita Mehta's *A River Sutra*, Vikram Chandra's *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*, Namita Gokhale's *Shakuntala*, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* are the most prominent among the novels to have made use of the myth extensively. The advent of the postcolonial and the postmodern trends in Indian English fiction in addition to the diasporic writers' nostalgic recreations of the homeland have been seen the reason for such a development. Devdutt Pattanaik's *The Pregnant King* stands apart from these novels, for it is neither the postcolonial assertion of the native myth as means of anti-hegemonic stance nor is it a postmodern rewriting of the myth. It is not even a diasporic writer trying to create a myth of his homeland, but it is a mythologist's attempt to present in fictional terms the ways of the working of a myth and its relevance and significance to the contemporary Indian society. Devdutt Pattanaik is a doctor by training, Chief Belief Officer of the Future Group by profession and a mythologist by passion and conviction. Introductory books like *Shiva, Vishnu, Devi* and *Man Who Was a Woman and Other Queer Tales* have already established Pattanaik as a major mythologist interpreting myth for the contemporary society.

In *The Pregnant King*, Devdutt Pattanaik makes use of the myth of Yuvanashva, one of the several minor characters of the *Mahabharata*. Interestingly, he is also one such character who is considered abnormal in normal discourse. For, Yuvanashva, a man and a king, gives birth to a son, Mandhata. As Pattanaik himself states in his *Author's Note*[1] in the novel, there are two references

to Yuvanashva in the *Mahabharata*. The first reference comes in the '*Vana Parva*' and the second in the '*Drona Parva*' during the Kurukshetra war. The first reference describes how Yuvanashva happens to drink the magical potion prepared to make his wife pregnant and the resultant pregnancy and child birth; and how Indra came to give suck to the child and call him Mandhata, "one who sucked me". The second reference to Yuvanshva is much smaller and is made by Narada to console the Pandavas lamenting the death of Abhimanyu. He tells them that Mandhata the son of Yuvanashva, who drew nourishment from no less a person than Indra, also had to die.[2]

Devdutt Pattanik takes up this 'marginalized tale' and imaginatively recreates to present issues that have been drawing considerable attention these days — "love, law, identity, gender, power and wisdom."[3] In other words, an age old myth is used to explore contemporary issues. The imaginative recreation of Pattanaik includes change of the time scheme to make Yuvanashva a younger contemporary to the Pandavas, making Shikandi the Father-in-law of Mandhata. In addition to creating fictional characters like Shialvati Yuvanshva's mother, his wives — Simantini, Pulomi, Keshini — and son Jayantha and many others, Pattanaik also brings in elements of Hijra folk traditions of Tamilnadu and Gujarat.

The prologue of the novel begins with a battle within and a battle without. With the Kurukshetra war between the Pandavas and Kauravas as the background, Yuvanashva is introduced as "struggling to win a battle he had fought for a long time"(5) against his mother who would not allow him to rule and whom he cannot oppose out of love and respect; yet he is torn by his desire to prove himself as a king and a man. Through this struggle between the mother and the son are introduced the issues of gender, power and identity, for Shilavati, who acts as the regent of Vallabhi, refuses to give up power till Yuvanashva proves his virility by begetting a son even though he is a consecrated king; behind her ambitious clinging on to power is the fact that she is very competent yet never is acknowledged as a the rightful ruler as she is a woman and not a man.

The eldest daughter of King Ahuka of Avanti, Shilavati earns

a name for herself by her understanding of the subtleties of dharma. Yet as she is a girl she has never been taught dharma. As a woman she is never expected to rule and so would never be given a chance to show the knowledge. The only way for Shilavati to put to use her knowledge of dharma and realise the potentialities of a ruler is to marry a short lived Prasenjit and rule Vallabhi indirectly as a widow of Prasenjit.

As if to guide the reader's response regarding the matters of gender as well as identity it is significant that the narrative begins with the description of Vallabhi and its deity Ileshwara. Ileshwara is dressed and worshipped as Ileshwari the goddess half the month when the moon is waning and as the moon starts to wax the deity is dressed and worshipped as Ileshwara the god. Further Yaja and Upayaja the *siddhas*, whose potion Yuvanashva drinks inadvertently and finds himself pregnant, see their guru Adinatha in different ways. Yaja who sought truth in stillness saw Adinatha as a man and an ascetic while Upayaja who sought truth in movement saw Adinatha as a woman and an enchantress.

That power corrupts everyone irrespective of one's sex is another issue which is elaborated in the novel. As her son grows, so does Shilavati's ambition to cling on to power so that she manipulates the love her son Yuvanashva has for her to retain power. She delays her son getting married, and when he gets married and is consecrated as a king she refuses to hand over power till he begets a son.

As part of yajna performed by Yaja and Upayaja to get a son for Yuvanashva, the queens of Yuvanashva, Simantini, Pulomi and Kesini, distribute cows to newly wed brahmin couples, during which the queens discover to their consternation two boys Sumedha and Somavat of Taranipur masquerading as husband and wife. This leads to a trial where questions of sex, gender, identity and social acceptability are raised and decided. The two boys — orphans and bosom friends — take the risk of cheating to get a cow for Sumedha as without at least a cow no one is ready to give their daughters in marriage and without marriage they are not allowed to take part in rituals and earn money to buy a cow. As they wait for the trial, a

yaksha Sthunakarna exchanges his/her womanhood, which he got from Shikandi when he exchanged his manhood with Shikandi's womanhood, with the manhood of Somavat so that by the time the trial starts Somavat is no longer a man but a woman Somavati. The two Sumedha and Somavat(i) now wish to be recognized man and wife as they realize they love each other more than anybody else.

When the duo Sumedha and Somavat(i) insist on being treated as man and wife, the king orders their burning to death as punishment and does not even allow their last wish to die together. It would be missing the point to regard it as a comment that same sex unions have never had social sanction as Geetha Doctor does.[4] Of course, as a mythologist Pattanaik brings to light non-heterosexual discourse in the Mahabharata and "how Indian culture did not condemn or invalidate"[5] it.

By refusing to accept the transgendered existence of Somavat(i), Yuvanashva seals his own fate. To make him see their 'truth' which as a king he has refused to accept, the ghosts of Sumdeha and Somavat(i) trick him into drinking the magical potion which Yaja and Upayaja prepare to make his wives pregnant and as a result Yuvanashva becomes pregnant. Shilavati, herself a victim of rigid social norms, wonders "...what will Yuvanashva be after he gives birth to it.....A woman? A half woman"(195)? She further observes: "Who will accept such a king? It will be the end of his kingship" (195).

As against the *Mahabharata* where Indra comes to feed the child and calls him Mandhata "he who is nursed by me", Pattanaik makes Yuvanashva himself to feed and nurse the baby and call it Mandhata. When the child is separated from him citing abnormality of the situation and the scandal it is going to generate Yuvnashva tries to know from various sources any precedent similar to his situation – a man giving birth to a child — so that he could validate his own experience. The bards, on the insistence of Yuvanashva, tell him of yet another man who gave birth to children – Aruni the charioteer of Surya. He once changed into a female form to see the dance of the apsaras in Indra's court only to find himself chased by Indra and made pregnant by him. When he came late for duty, he

had to tell the truth to the angry sun god. The sun god wished to see him in the female form. When Aruni showed him his female form, he too fell in love with him and made love to him. Aruni then gave birth to two sons.

The bards then inform Yuvanshva only Bhangasvana may know what it is to be a man and a woman, a father and a mother. But as most so-called freak experiences, the narrative of Bhangasvana is forgotten. To the utter dismay of Vipula, his minster, Yuvanashva agrees to the overlordship of the Pandavas, if Arjuna tells him the tale of Bhangasvana. Arjuna expresses his inability to tell about Bhangasvana as he does not remember it but agrees to narrate his own experience of womanhood in their exile in Virata kingdom. But even Arjuna's narration of his experience as a woman does not satisfy the curiosity of Yuvanashva for Arjun though had a woman's body felt like a man drawn to Uttari, the daughter of Virata. Arjuna suggests that Krishna may know what it is to be a woman for during Kurukshetra war he had become a woman and a wife for a night to Iravan a son of Arjuna. Even this tale does not satisfy Yuvanshva because "Arjuna knew what it was to be a woman. Krishna knew what it was to be a wife. But neither knew what it was to be a mother" (253).

An attack of fever to Mandhata and Jayantha confirms Yuvanashva's feelings that he is mother to Mandhata and father to Jayantha. For Jayantha gets better with Polumi's visit to the Fever goddess but Mandhata does not get better till Yuvanshva goes to the Fever Goddess' temple in woman's dress and offers lemon and sour curds. But, then starts the tussle between his yearning to be called 'mother' by Mandhata and his kingship. Shilavati who knows well the effects of going against the established order says "Motherhood is a disease when it springs in a man's body like kingship is in a woman's" (253). So, she tries her best to put an end to it by separating completely Yuvanshva and Mandhata. To retain his kingship, Yuvanashva too cannot but keep quiet.

Yuvanashva gets an opportunity to tell his son when Mandhata refuses to go to Amba's *svayamvara* citing abnormality of her birth. Amba is the daughter of Shikandi the woman-man. Mandhata by

refusing Amba is rejecting his father and the truth of his own birth. Yuvanashva reveals to Mandhata the truth of his birth. Mandhata refuses to accept it because by his own earlier argument the truth of his birth will deny him the crown as in his logic "the king is child's mother. So he cannot pass the crown to his son"(291). Mandhata sees in his father's argument, as Yuvanashva himself had done earlier, an attempt to keep him away from power; so shouts "Why did it take you sixteen years to declare this"?

The struggle for power comes full circle when Shilavati suggests to Mandhata to marry Amba, Shikandi's daughter so that no one, not even his father, can stop him from getting the throne with the powerful Pandavas on his side. Shilavati successfully manipulates the opinion of the Mahasabha when a disappointed, frustrated Yuvanashva attempts at revealing the truth of Mandhata's birth. He is declared mad on the instigation of Shilavati. In anger and frustration, he renounces his family and kingdom.

Three stages could be discerned in the spiritual quest of Yuvanashva and three stages too in the final resolution of the issues of identity, gender and power. The first stage is when Yuvanashva comes across the bards who are now willing to narrate to him the story of Bhangasvana. They tell him that Bhangasvana is none other than Ileswara, the presiding deity of Vallabhi. He begged the goddess to restore his manhood. She modified the spell to make him all male on full moon days and all female on new moon days. The fate of marginalization forces Yuvanashva to recognize the blunder that he has committed with Sumedha and Somavat(i) when their ghosts confess to him that they have made him drink the magical potion which made him pregnant so that he too can see and understand the position.

A meeting with Sthunakarna, who recognizes his motherhood by calling him Amba's mother in law, furthers the spiritual quest of Yuvanashva. He realizes that he has been a father and a mother yet he has been incomplete, when Sthunakarna who has been both a man and a woman points out to him the flesh of both man and woman offers no peace. Yuvanashva goes in search of Adinatha the teacher "to find the secret of completeness" (330). On his way

he meets many hermits who claim women can never be rishis revealing their gender bias as female flesh they believe can be caught only after it submits to passion and woman are impure as they shed their red seed every month, Yuvanashva wonders what would be his fate as he is both man and woman. The hermits direct him to Yaja and Upayaja. It is Yaja and Upayaja who finally lead him to the ultimate truth. As he wonders why Yaja sees Adhinatha as man and an ascetic and Upayaja sees Adinatha as a woman and an enchantress, they say Adinatha is neither. Then Yaja and Upayaja show him "a world beyond the flesh." They show him an image of Shiva and Shakti as Adinatha. Yuvanashva realizes that the image is "Symbolic man and symbolic woman. That's what they were. Vehicles of an idea. Two ideas. No. One idea, two expressions. Two halves of the same idea. Mutually interdependent" (335). Revealing that gender and identity are just social constructs "the ways of society" not eternal truths, Yaja and Upayaja tell Yuvanashva that "without either there is neither. They are two halves of the whole... Neither can be superior or inferior" (335). Such hierarchies of man's superiority and woman's inferiority are creations of the mind of *manavas* not of *rishis* who know the eternal truth. Nor one's identity is made by one's birth, lineage and sex.

Yuvanashva finally realizes that even Ileshwara is "a symbol, a window to wisdom" (336). S/he represents "myriad forms of matter sometime male, sometime female, sometimes in between ....Beyond it all formless, stood still Soul" (336). Wisdom acquired, Yuvanashva feels "free from the snarling power games between men and women. Free from the constricting vocabulary of society" (336). The Angirasa rishis call him Neelakanta Bhairavi and worship him for he reminds people "what is impossible in the mind of man is possible in the mind of God"; and his "throat is blue with a truth that threatens our sense of order." So, Yuvanashva/Neelakanta Bhairavi himself turns to be a symbol of myriad forms of matter within which stands the still soul. By coalescing the myth of Bhangasvana and his own fictitious tale of Ileswara along with folktales of Sumedha and Somavat(i) and by rewriting imaginatively the tale of Yuvanashva, Pattanaik very dexterously projects the

issues that have attracted a lot of attention in contemporary times – issues of gender, identity and power.

As the above analysis would have shown, Devdutt Pattanaik's treatment of myth in this novel is quite different from a mere postcolonial or postmodern rendering of the myth. He no doubt uses the *Mahabharata* myth to explore contemporary issues yet the myth is used more as a tool to explore the meaning behind the myth than presenting a counterpoint to colonialist attitude or subverting the myth to present an idiosyncratic view of history. Myths are used in the novel to see how they preserve within themselves wisdom which most of the time is not completely understood because of the restricting ideology of the times in a culture and society. Some myths like that of Yuvanashva and Bhangasvana are pushed to the margin till the society is receptive enough to take it. It is here pertinent to remember once again that the *Mahabharata* does not see the tales of Yuvanashva or Bhangasvana as abnormal; they are only pushed to the margin to be retraced. *The Pregnant King* turns out to be a mythologist attempt to present in fictional terms the workings of a myth in addition to project the ancient wisdom which sees beyond gender. So, to see the novel as "Amarachitra Katha for adults" which "lacks seriousness"[7] is untenable even though the novel is as gripping a narrative as amarachitra katha is for children.

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PROBLEMATIZING THE CULTURE OF ADJUSTMENT: A CONSIDERATION OF BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S *THE TIGER'S DAUGHTER*

Sunita Siroha

In her interview with Ron Hogan Bharati Mukherjee emphasizes the point that she is a "woman who was born in Calcutta, but I've lived in America my entire adult life and consider myself an American. My literary soul was formed by literature from around the world, but especially American literature. I'm an American writer of Indian origin. I am not doing an exotic ghetto" (Mukherjee, Interview with Alson 35)? This clearly throws light on Bharati Mukherjee's dilemma as a creative artist. After her settlement in U.S.A., the artist in Bharati Mukherjee is caught in the web of cultural complexities. *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971) is a reflection of Mukherjee's creative dilemma as a novelist writing in a country which is not her own. Specific issues connected with the national identity confront her characters and sometimes they fail to cope with the pressures of these complex issues. When Mukherjee landed in America, America was passing through major changes. It was a country which had the power to infuse potentiality and vitality into the lives of the immigrants. That is why Bharati Mukherjee was tempted to formulate her "maximalist" credo in the following words:

> I can imagine a poster over the United States Court House: WELCOME MAXIMALISTS : HELLO EXPANSIONIST. The New America I know and have been living in for the last seven years in a world, by defiinitions of doubles.... They have all shed past lives and languages, and have travelled half the world in every direction to come here and begin again. They are bursting with stories, too many to begin telling. They have lived through centuries of history in a single lifetime - village born, colonized, traditionally raised, educated. What they have assimilated in 30 years has taken the west 10 times that number of years to create. Time travel is a reality - I have seen it in my own life. Bionic Men and Women are living among us. (Mukherjee, "Immigrant Writing")

Obviously, the question of conveying feminine sensibility authentically in an alien country remains one of the burning questions which keeps on haunting Bharati's creative imagination. She is a writer of Indian origin living in America proclaiming herself an American

but at the same time she categorically asserts: "To me there are no Indian themes, American themes or English themes. What I am trying to produce is a voice perhaps. The word voice has a special place in my aesthetics." (*Sunday Magazine*). The quest for an authentic voice determines the structure and meaning of *The Tiger's Daughter*. The fact of the matter is that she wants to explore the problems of a displaced individual in order to see how a sense of displacement and a sense of peace are indirectly interlinked. Mukherjee has rightly put it in the beginning of *The Tiger's Daughter*:

> Changes in the anatomies of nations of continents are easy to perceive. But changes wrought by gods or titans are too subtle for measurement. At first the human mind suffers premonitions, then it learns to submit. (7)

This fact underlines the profound link between the structuring of sensibility vis-a-vis the structuring of landscape. In other words, it would not be wrong to suggest that sudden changes in landscape may contribute to various changes in one's sensibility. As a result it becomes important to find out how an authentic voice which may remove the intractable barriers of communication. The quest for an authentic voice may also imply a quest for socio-cultural values which are necessary to stabilize the sensibility of the immigrants living in a different continent/ nation. In fact, the entire situation surrounding an immigrant becomes quite complex because he finds himself unable to build a bridge between his past and his present. The immigrant experience, thus, acquires a new dimension as in the case of Tara, the protagonist of *The Tiger's Daughter*. Tara's dilemma, her quest for an authentic voice, her predicament as an immigrant in American society lends a special structure to *The Tiger's Daughter*. What is important in Tara's case is that she can only sit by a window in America to dream of Harilal, her great grandfather: "She would wonder at the gulf that separated him from herself. But her dreams and her training would yield a knowledge that was visionless" (9). It is this visionless knowledge which points out that fundamental predicament of immigrants, her knowledge is visionless because it has no voice — it has no voice hence it has no meaning — it has no meaning for Mukherjee's protagonists who face the enigma which has been brilliantly described by T. S. Eliot

in "Four Quartets":

> Words strain,
> crack and 'sometimes break, under the burden,
> under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
> Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
> Will not stay still. Shrieking voices
> Scolding, mocking, or merely chattering,
> Always assail them. (175)

Like her creator Tara is a young Indian born woman who comes back to Calcutta after having spent seven years in the United States to visit her family. However, this visit makes her aware of the wide gulf between two nations/ two cultures. Socio-cultural mores and values of her native land miserably fail to enthuse her. On the other hand, she is also painfully aware that she cannot absorb herself into American culture. Her critical reading of Sartre, Camus, Rilke, Mann and Joyce beyond *Dubliners* makes her aware of the bitterness and agony prevalent in contemporary Calcutta. She tells Pronob:

> "It's all so very different," Tara said. "And it's going to be a lot more different... and tragic.""
> Don't be silly!" Pronob retorted.
> "We've got to beat this nonsense out of system. Purge our factories of unions and things like that." (45)

Her seven years' stay in America completely changed her point of view but the fact remains that America holds no fascination for her. Rather it has driven her to despair:

> The house on Camac Street began to exercise its hypnosis on her. New York, she thought now, had been exotic. Not because it has laundromats and subways. But because there were policemen with dogs prowling the underground tunnels. Because girls like her, at least almost like her, were being knifed in elevators in their own apartment buildings. Because students were rioting about campus recruiters and far-away wars rather than the price of rice or stiffness of final exams. Because people were agitated over pollution. The only pollution she had been warned against in Calcutta had been caste pollution. New York was certainly extraordinary, and it had driven her to despair. (33)

That is why her yearnings bloom when she returns to India but her first reaction is quite shocking. The houses on Marine drive used to be a source of attraction for her in the past but "now their shabbiness appalled her" (18). The gap between her past apprehension

of reality and her realization of the contemporary world is quite apparent. She is also disturbed to see so many sick and deformed people sitting listlessly on bundles and trunks. Her contact with the present Bombay makes her supercilious. Her traveling accommodations in the train cause more confusion than a feeling of comfort. When a Marwari family and others make their way into her compartment, she ironically observes:

> But the gentlemen in the compartment simply did not interest her. The Marwari was indeed very ugly and tiny and insolent. He reminded her of a circus animal who had gotten the better of his master. The Nepali was a fidgety older man with coarse hair. He kept crossing and recrossing his legs and pinching the creases of his pants. Both men, Tara decided, could effortlessly ruin her journey to Calcutta. (20)

Another dimension of her immigrant experience is her marriage with David. After her marriage she realizes that she is not being credited for her contribution to the maintenance of family life. As a result her personality is broken into fragments. In the prayer room she becomes extremely nervous. She does not remember the next step of the ritual. She feels that

> It was not a simple loss, Tara feared, this forgetting of prescribed actions; it was a little death, a hardening of the heart, a cracking of axis and centre. But her mother came quickly with the relief of words. (51)

When she hears "Raghupati Raghava Rajaram/ Patita Pavana Sitaram", She wants to sing the prayer. She thinks that the repetition of the prayer "would stave off the madness that curled under the pungent sunlight" (53). However she realizes that

> the walls of her mind were caving in like black tenement buildings in Shambazar. The children near Tara were screaming now, making each *Raghupati* and *Raghava* crackle, eyeing the fruits offered to the icons on silver plates. Their bright animal-eyes darted from little table to table. A liveliness or greed settled on the children and quickened their song. Tara had not thought that holy names could seem so abrasive. (53)

Thus it becomes clear that in the first eight sections of the novel Tara's predicament, her nervousness, her efforts to adapt to American society, her psychological upheaval and her attempt to reconcile the two different worlds are projected in an artistic manner to show how a young immigrant like Tara is exiled from the new and her unsteady and unconventional approach to life receives a set-

back when she confronts the external reality.

It is true that Tara finds it extremely difficult to come to terms with American life when she is dispatched to America at the early age of fifteen for her studies:

> For Tara Vassar had been an almost unsalvageable mistake. If She had not been a Banerjee, a Bengali Brahmin, the great granddaughter of Harilal Banerjee, or perhaps if she had not been trained by the good nuns at St. Blaise's to remain composed and ladylike in all emergencies, she would have rushed home to India at the end of her first week. (10)

A profound feeling of homesickness overpowers her. She was so heartbroken that she prayed to Kali for strength. However, circumstances contrive in such a manner that she falls in love with an American. Her chance meeting with David Cardwight also betrays the faith of an Indian in the inevitable.

The sharp contrast between Tara's outlook and David Cardwight's wholly western point of view is used creatively by the novelist to highlight the cultural differences and the complex problem of communication. Moreover the concept of marriage in India is entirely different from American concept of marriage. In India a marriage is not only a complete union of two individuals; it is a coming together of two families as well. Marriage is considered to be an extremely important *samsakar* which enjoys a particular and peculiar sanctity. It is not only a union of two bodies but a fusion of two souls into one. However, the western view is entirely different because in the west marriage is considered to be simply a social contract between two individuals.

Throughout the novel Tara has been shown as shuttling between the world of alienation and the world of belonging - the European world and the Indian world. This shuttling between the two worlds contributes to her split personality. Moreover the aimlessness and diffusiveness of her return to India are symbolically underpinned by a number of journeys beginning with a train journey from Bombay to Calcutta. It has also been shown that she is gripped by the foreigenness of the spirit. With a combination of malice, charm, irony and sympathy, Bharati Mukherjee describes how Tara experiences the various pangs of the culture of assimilation. It has also

been shown how she is pushed to the agis of her old world yet exiled from the new and how she tries vainly to reconcile the exacting demands of the two worlds: "It was so vague, so pointless, so diffuse, this trip to India"(130). Moreover Tara also "knew she could never tell David that the misery of her city was too immense and blurred to be listed and assailed one by one". Caught in the complex web of the quagmire of human relationships Tara finds herself at a crossroad: "That it was fatal to fight for justice, that it was better to remain passive and absorb all shocks as they came" (131).

Thus a critical reading of the text highlights the dilemma of an Indian woman caught up in a cross-cultural dilemma. As a matter of fact Tara is one of the first creations of the novelist through whom Bharati Mukheejee theorises feminism, alienation and the need for the assimilation of two distinct cultural values. Throughout the novel she is shown as torn apart by the feeling of nostalgia and rootlessness. She has to pass through the intense cataclysmic feelings of alienation and yearning for belongingness. The novel is open ended as the reader is left wondering whether she could succeed in returning to her husband or she experienced the pangs of being a victim:

> And Tara, still locked in a car across the street from the Catelli-Continental, wondered whether she would ever get out of Calcutta, and if she didn't, whether David would ever know that she loved him fiercely. (210)

The ending of the novel is used as a paradigm to question and discover, rediscover the new ways of defining reality in a world standing on the brink of the glorious mountain consisting of cash and pebbles.

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RUSKIN BOND: A NOTE

Iffat Ara

Ruskin Bond's dwelling, like that of a naturalist, is situated in the midst of a mountain. Hence it is called Ivy Cottage. It is surrounded by dark green, closely-cut deodar trees. They seem to grow in a fashion as if Nature has provided both entertainment and protection for a sensitive poet and writer of Ruskin Bond's caliber. We walked along the long paths that encircled the mountains, breathed the cool air blowing across trees, passed through the busy landour bazaar and sister's bazaar to reach Ruskin Bond's small cottage built on a high hill. His smiling face and lively appearance made a very good impact on us. His glowing complexion reflects the flowers and fruits he cherishes so much. This calm and quiet soul, wearing glasses did not appear to be fed-up with life and is not a solitary being as most scholars are envisaged. Though he is a little bulky yet is both intelligent and active. His house reflects his fine taste. Inspite of certain limitations his inherent aesthetic sense has lent beauty to his cottage. He has enough talent to use his creative imagination to decorate his house. Though built on a high hill yet the roof is beautifully arranged. A variety of flowers, creepers, fruits and flower-pots are put in such a way as if he has imitated Nature in all its splendour.

When Ruskin Bond came to know of our arrival through a visiting card he gave us a hearty welcome and received us in his living room. His huge dog who was noble like his master perceived the horror-stricken guests and followed the direction of Ruskin Bond and left the room immediately. The living room also serves the purpose of a study. The almirahs are full of books and a sofa-set is kept for the visitors. Two photographs of well-known English musicians are put up on the wall. Some decoration pieces are placed on wooden almirahs. The most fascinating picture is the print of a lion designed on a wall-carpet. During the conversation Ruskin Bond quoted an incident and spoke in a humorous style:

> My grandfather was extremely fond of animals. Once he kept a baby lion as a pet in the house. It freely roamed about but when it frequently made the hens of neighbours a prey of its gluttony my grandfather was upset.

He ultimately decided to present the cub to a zoo. It was a matter of great concern for him for he could not bear to part with the cub. Then it was sent to the zoo. After some time my grandfather went to see it at the zoo. He was feeding the cub with fruits and other delicious things from behind the wires of the cage. He held out his hand to hold the paw of the cub. The caretaker warned him against danger for the cub was quite wild and unpredictable in its behaviour. Grandfather smiled triumphantly and said he had trained the cub and given it to the zoo as a valuable gift. The caretaker smiled mischievously and replied that the former cub passed away and it was a new addition.

Ruskin Bond's other room is more attractive and significant than the first one. There is a strong bed on which he sleeps. There is also a window in the room, which offers Ruskin Bond a glimpse of the beauty of Nature in all its fecundity. Sometimes the soft clouds seem to move around in the sky. They cover the whole atmosphere. Hence the beautiful sights of Nature disappear for a while. Then slowly the sheet of clouds disappears and deodar, pine, almond and other trees exhibit their beauty. There is a scenic background of mountains all around and beautiful trees grow in rows.

In the valley one can see wooden houses and other buildings that indicate the presence of human habitation. The same window also offers Ruskin Bond a view of the changing seasons. He is disturbed by the scorching heat of the sun and looks for cold water and juicy fruits. Hence he has the special ability to convert harshness into a pleasant experience. Also he draws pleasure from the sight of beautiful white snow rather than remain tense on account of the crisp cold winds. He prefers the variety of colours exhibited by the rainy season to all other delights. All the sights of natural beauty are attractive. The blooming flowers, plants, fruits, animals, and birds make him feel happy and he remains absorbed in them. He seems to share the bliss of Nature, which enriches his whole existence. He is such a comprehensive personality that the bitter and sweet things in life do not make him tense. He keeps his mind open and receives those impressions that are more distinct and finds in them appropriate moments of delight.

The rift among his parents broke the unity of the family. His mother married a second time and started a new phase of life while

the father passed through an unhappy experience. But he sailed the broken boat and took the children to their destined abode. Ruskin Bond was the focus of his father's attention and by imbibing a spirit of devotion to studies he bestowed upon him he became a great writer of his time. His father's early death was a great setback to him but he managed to live with sweet memories of a bright past.

Ruskin Bond and his forefathers had a British heritage. He admired the delicacy and subtlety of the English language and literature. He got inspiration from books written in this language and became a voracious reader. But he was born in India and he felt the warmth of love among the Indians. The mountains and rivers, valleys and fields, the woods and flowers, plants, fruits and trees, animals and birds, the winds and the earthiness around, the familiar faces and known surroundings all became a source of inspiration for him. When he landed in Britain in order to develop his talents, he was amazed by an afterthought that in this cold climate with proud and indifferent folk he will never become an eminent writer. He returned to India after a period of three years and found everything teaming with life.

Ruskin Bond wrote in his autobiography that he was born to become a writer. Being an Indian by birth the country and its natural landscape attracted his attention. The love he was deprived of during his childhood was compensated by his adopting an Indian family and it further helped him to overcome the bitterness of being a bachelor. That family lives along with him in Ivy Cottage and the harmony of their voices, like the sound of music, makes him feel peaceful. He compares this hum-drum to the beautiful symphony of sounds in music. He therefore believes that natural and artificial music always inspires the mind and brings repose.

Ruskin Bond's appreciation of the innocence of childhood reflects his own psychology. Like the character of father-old-time in Hardy's novel he was mature and sober in his infancy. He ignored the childhood and youth that eagerly awaited him. His proximity to children is his religion. They are torch-bearers of the modern times, intelligent and fresh like fruits and flowers, attractive and selfless like objects of Nature. Ruskin Bond also thinks about disabled

children like his own sister Alen. She was like a sick flower who did not bloom but withered away. In childhood he was devoted to books, toys and the stamps of various countries that provided him knowledge about geography, history and politics. He disregarded the young and middle-aged people who are no better than strangers because they tend to conceal their identity. He preferred the old people who enjoyed Ruskin Bond's company. They are capable of describing their experiences in an interesting manner, are kind, generous and affectionate. They are themselves pessimists but inspire optimism in others.

Ruskin Bond preferred his father to all others because he was able to inculcate love and ideal thoughts into his son. He looked smart in his military uniform. It is human psychology that one devotes one's whole life to achieve an ideal. Ruskin Bond is that fortunate soul who actualized the dreams of his dead father. He acquired fame in the world of letters.

Ruskin Bond's ideal in life is to read books and record his experiences of life. His far-sightedness and intelligence make him perceive that he will never go astray and books will be a source of sustenance to him. To achieve his ends he made use of the natural landscape and his own experiences provided him with the raw material for his literary objectives. His wide knowledge and perceptiveness provided him details about fruits and flowers. Such vast knowledge about flowers is also exhibited by Perdita in Shakespeare's play entitled The Winter's Tale. His comments about fruits and flowers are amazing.

Ruskin Bond, like Shakespeare offers various connotations of the word 'love'. Shakespeare prefers love to everything else and considers it an ultimate truth. Ruskin Bond has also reflected on many aspects of love. Love is reflected in almost all relationships. If human beings turn indifferent he like wordsworth, seeks refuge in the lap of Nature. He finds solace in nearness to natural objects. This mutual attraction is realized only by the devotees of Nature. The animals and birds are closer to human beings because they very generously offer their love to mankind and are gracious enough to receive Ruskin Bond's companionship. He received love and lost

it but still he values it as an eternal truth. It is love that sustains him, lends happiness to him and enables him to convey new thoughts and ideas through his writings.

Ruskin Bond regards mind as the most precious part of human existence. This truth dawned on him on account of the deprivation of his disabled sister who suffered from various diseases and could not proceed beyond her childhood. She used to draw uneven lines in order to present a picture of human beings and animals but the disabled child's sketches remained incomplete. Ruskin Bond, on the contrary, developed his gifts to such a degree that he became a well-known writer. Also whenever he felt depressed and lonely books and indulgence in creative activity offered him solace and delight. He made friends with those who either offered him food for thought or entertained him with their company in moments of depression.

Ruskin Bond condemned the partition of the country on the pretext that it caused bloodshed and deprived many talented persons of their mental alertness. Moreover, many creative writers were lost forever and could not complete their assigned tasks. Besides mental activity Ruskin Bond also liked to indulge in physical recreation. He was fond of playing football and hockey. When he could no more indulge in physical recreation he became a good walker. The natural landscape provided him with beautiful sights and sounds. He has given frequent references to nature and its abundance throughout his works.

According to Ruskin Bond this world is like a zig-zag path. The more one walks along it he explores new things. There are other benefits as well. His quest of knowledge helps him to forget the pains and sufferings of life. He therefore learns a better way of leading life. Ruskin Bond equates life with a perusal of books. One should read whatever, is relevant there, what appeals to one's emotional self, and preserve all this in one's mind. One should make use of that store of knowledge and experience at an appropriate moment. This is better than leading a meaningless life. One should participate in life and its pleasures in an intelligent way.

Science and Mathematics did not appeal to him for he was

more inclined towards literature and was concerned with its refinement. He did not pursue his studies further after finishing his schooling. He had limited resources at his disposal but he possessed independence of mind and spirit. Being a free-thinker he could take care of himself. He visited libraries, made acquaintance with friends, wandered in the city and went on excursions. He could take wise decisions and remained steadfast in this regard. He was never materialistic in his views about life. His concept of wealth is unique. One of his close friends inquired of him: "Ruskin do you admire wealth"?

He immediately retorted, "I like wealth but I don't love it. It is useful but not worth appreciation." He had a golden rule about wealth: "do not hoard wealth and if you have enough don't spend it thriftily. Also do not distribute it very generously among others. It is dangerous to store too much wealth". This lack of wealth deprived him of the happiness of life. No woman could admire the talented and sincere young man. But the ambitious Ruskin Bond acquired knowledge, formed a circle of friends and developed love of Nature in himself. Thus he became the wealthiest and most fortunate man.

Ruskin Bond's similes and images are worth appreciation:

> The rain has swept over the hot dry land, cleansing the sky and earth of dust and dirt; it is like a soft hand running over smooth silk. I saw it flirting with trembling trees, kissing the leaves, bathing the earth.... And now the warm sun bathes us in gold.

Ruskin Bond is a solitary being but his immense confidence in himself did not turn him into a pessimist. He once wrote a few verses and gave them to his little friend Some:

> Hold on to your dreams,
> Do not let them die.
> We are lame without them
> Birds that cannot fly.

It is difficult to find a solution to one's problems because they are enclosed within the veil of unknowability.

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BOOK REVIEWS

CHOI LAI SHEUNG, *WHISPER OF THE STAR: A COLLECTION OF POEMS*

Translated by Zhang Zhizhong

(USA: The Earth Culture Press, 2009), pp.247, $10.00.

R.K. Singh

CHOI Lai Sheung, who writes brief personal lyrical poems, is a contemporary Chinese poet, born in Shishi City in Fujian Province but now settled in Hong Kong. She is author of over 70 books and editor-in-chief of the multilingual *The World Poets Quarterly* Reading her 100 poems in translation, I find Choi a romantic visionary poet, with a matured aesthetic and poetic sense. Unlike many poets whose verses are flat and stale, Choi's poems have much of enduring value. She melds thoughts, feelings and emotions, with high and low of spirit, and spectacles of inner reality:

> How can I who
> Is imperfect
> Be tolerated by my love
> I am all for beauty
> But not beauty itself. (227)

Both Choi and Zhang Zhizhong reach a great height of spiritual richness in creating and translating the last two lines of the poem 'Imperfection'. When the duo say: "Tenacity is kneaded in wordlessness/Silence is running with tears of heart" (225); "Dreaming to spread my wings of heart/To fly into paradise/With fragrance of the mortal world" (209); "The sea as passion/The rainbow as brush/I dance and soar in the universe" (189); "Just a stretch of rainbow/In a self-less round/Between the sky and the earth" (185); "I am a net in searching and exploring/Cast round the unknown ocean" (183); "The dream is a pure land/Where all hearts are equal" (175); "Rivers and lakes stretch to infinity/Water and the sky share the same color" (165); "The plight of existence shall be/Conquered under the feet" (137); "To grow a pot of smiles/Therefrom/Through winds and rains/Concern and passion retain" (131); and "Lift historical trauma skyward/ To wash bright aspiration of the time" (105); I sense an overhead

awareness, or the mantric effect *a la* Sri Aurobindo, the famous Indian poet-philosopher.

Zhang Zhizhong must have found Choi a difficult poet to translate, particularly for her spiritual consciousness that evades exact expression in English. Yet he has completed the challenging task so well that I feel a sense of satisfaction, reading Choi's verses in English. Both succeed in drilling through "the fence of time and space/and transcend the boundary of nations" (177).

Reading Choi's poery is like experiencing an ascent to loftiness of love, life, nature, and simplicity. She reflects an inner culture, the quintessence of the Chinese spirit, which is ever inspiring:

> No need to sing fair-sounding songs
> No need to compose melodious music
> Great passion and emotion
> Bring brightness all the way. (159)

She has a sense of purpose and mission: self-discovery and world-discovery. With her heart- wings, she soars between heaven and earth, and expresses her unity with nature: "As many wonders of the sea/As many wonders of me" (111). Elsewhere, she says that with a triumphant heart she files and flutters "into heroism and righteousness/Between heaven and earth" (149), and scales a new height in her consciousness: "I am going to/Prove my position/With my craggy/Integrity" (155). Unity, harmony and love are her key notes.

Choi Lai Sheúng's excellence lies in her freshness in each poem. She is not imitative of the past, nor does she think and feel in any pre-established ways. By her own admission, she is an "industrious tiller" who tries "to reach perfection along with the inclination and seasons/To bring fruits upon fruits" (23). Her poetic genius achieves an excellent balance between what is conventionally available in some of the best Chinese lyrical poetry and what we have been reading in contemporary poetry in English elsewhere.

Dr Zhang Zhizhong as translator appears to have really worked hard to prove how well Choi's diverse materials of the poem are integrated and how successful she has been in proportion to its tight structure. Each word he chooses appears the right word, if not the bet word, for expressing the total meaning of the poet.

K.K. SHARMA, *SHELLEY'S SPENSERIAN HERITAGE AND OTHER ESSAYS*

(New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2009), pp.148, Rs. 450.00

H.C. Gupta

A reviewer, notwithstanding his personal likes and dislikes and other factors like his times, etc, should necessarily observe impartiality. In recent years I have reviewed a good number of books, creative and critical, by eminent persons like M.K. Nair, A.A. Ansari and others, but I have not found any of them as deeply satisfying as the one under review. As usual, K.K. Sharma has fathomed new depths, scaling ever new heights in his erudite literary intellectual research papers published in "Shelley's Spenserian Heritage and Other Essays". The essays showcase his incisive insightful studies and analytical and critical acumen. Spick and span, discursive and elusive, they make a gripping and fascinating reading: they severally call to the reader's mind Keats's lines – "Then felt I like some watcher of the skies/ When a new planet swims into his ken" ("On First Looking into Chapman's Homer"). Professor Sharma's enlightening probes into the virgin fields of the topics comprehensively and meticulously discuss the matter. Indeed, readers greedily collect the novel visionary significations and researchical findings.

Confessionally Sharma says in "Preface" to the essays that they have appeared in journals and books of international level. The captions of the essays tell the main thrust and constituents that have made them 'Essays' in the real sense of the term – artistic one wholes. These are: 1. Shelley's Spenserian Heritage: The Anxiety of Influence; 2. "Large Loose Baggy Monsters": Henry James's Radical Critique of Leo Tolstoy's Fiction; 3. Virginia Woolf on Leo Tolstoy; 4. "A Born Writer": Somerset Maugham's Estimation of Leo Tolstoy the Fictionist; 5. Joyce Cary's Critical Responses to Leo Tolstoy's Art and Ideas; 6. The Interior Monologue in Joyce Cary's *The Horse's Mouth*; 7. The Cinematic Device of the Flashback in Cary's *To be a Pilgrim* and *The Moonlight*; 8. The Partition and the Indian English Novel; and 9. The Male Pure Artist as Feminist: R.K. Narayan's *The Dark Room* as the First Authentic Articulation of

Feminist Consciousness in Indian English Fiction. Lengthy captions cogently encapsulate the writer's motifs on one hand, and on the other hand define the boundaries of the land traversed.

The research papers more than justify the considerable period over which they have been written. With his researchical background and aptitude, Prof. Sharma has brought out some unknown and little known facts and has shown intellectual honesty by acknowledging the plentiful sources. The one common striking feature of the essays is their precision, compactness, coherence, cohesion and comprehensiveness. The reader feels at first a bit surprised, then he feels deeply interested and finally rewarded in much useful information, knowledge and enlightenment. Even an amateur reader can mark the conspicuous presence of the central idea and architectonic unity. Most of these essays have been written with full zeal, gusto and dedication.

K.K. Sharma has succeeded in inculcating almost all the basic qualities of research papers: Interpreting things critically, developing interest, attitude and aesthetic awareness, observing, exploring and ordering and appreciating patterns and relationships; developing basic concepts and logical thinking. This certainly promotes communicating, acquiring knowledge and learning research skills. At times he poses questions and devises experiments or investigations to answer them clearly.

The book has startlingly only a few typographical and proofreading errors; my experience in this regard – critically reviewing books published by most of Indian publishers – being quite unhappy. So I am quite happy with this book.

In conclusion, it may be stated that the research papers, contained in the book under review, are invaluable for all those readers and scholars who would like to learn writing research articles inasmuch as they serve as a practical handbook vis-à-vis writing research papers and essays. The learned critic, to the benefit of the young scholars, has focused on both the thematic and technical sides of the authors and works examined by him. The design on the jacket is attractive, and the price of the book can not be said to be taxing to the genuine scholar.

R.K. SINGH, *MECHANICS OF RESEARCH WRITING*

(Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 2010), pp.182, Rs. 98.00

M. Mojibur Rahman

With new developments in the field of communicative writing, much has changed over the years with need to know and develop skills of research writing. With this in mind, the author, who has been teaching written communication skills to tertiary and post tertiary level students for about three decades, has revised and enlarged his earlier publication, *Writing Your Thesis and Research Papers* (1996). With his long experience of teaching the subject, he has now added two new sections – a detailed account of various style manuals with examples and use of punctuations –, both of which are common weakness of students and teachers.

Needless to say, writing well is a complicated process but research writing is more complicated because, as the author says, "it is formal and convention bound, requiring skills and maturity at several levels." Prof. Singh deals with research writing in a systematic way, making the book a practical help for all those who have to write a thesis, dissertation, project report, or academic paper.

The first chapter deals with characteristics of academic writing in detail. It makes the reader/researcher aware of the nature of academic writing. For writing, three competences are required: subject, organizational and linguistic. This chapter provides a detailed description of these competences.The second chapter approaches style of writing, that is, how the language is used objectively and formally.

The third and fourth chapters focus on writing, especially research writing. The Interactional Process Approach he discusses is a revised version of his most referred to research paper published in *English Teaching Forum* in 1994. One becomes aware of both the process and product as one proceeds through pre-writing, writing, and post-writing stages and organizes the contents.

The fifth chapter of the book provides a detailed description of formatting and referencing. It provides with suitable examples a

description of arranging ones research. This chapter also discusses different style manuals, such as MLA Style, APA Style, AMA Style, MHRA Style, and Chicago Style with suitable examples. Most of the time researchers commit mistakes in referencing and making bibliography.

Abstract writing is the most difficult task in writing research paper and thesis/dissertation. This short writing should provide a gist of whatever is written in the manuscript. There is a separate chapter on writing abstract in the book which explains how to write abstract for different purposes. I wish the author had provided more examples to elaborate the abstract writing.

The last but one chapter deals with using punctuation, which is a most difficult and confusing part of research writing. The author deals with the use of punctuation marks such as commas, ellipses, semicolon, colon, dashes, and apostrophe. At the end of the book the author provides a summary and checklist for the readers.

The detailed reading of the book should testify to R. K. Singh's effort and insight in presenting the subject matter with a clear understanding of the problems of researchers. The researchers encounter problems organizing and writing the research paper and thesis because they fail to research the general topic before they decide on a thesis statement; they fail to provide an appropriate thesis statement; they fail to provide a connection between the thesis statement and all of the topic sentences in the manuscript; they fail to support the writing with adequate information that is relevant only to the topic; or they fail to correctly cite their sources. The book provides solutions to these problems.

Apart from few typographical errors, the book makes a smooth reading. I believe that it will be very useful and enlightening to all researchers and teachers concerned with academic writing and its convention because of its simple and lucid treatment of a complex and challenging subject. Undoubtedly, it is more helpful than *MLA Handbook* and other studies on the subject for the persons interested in research work.

DEEPIKA SRIVASTAVA, *RECOLLECTIONS AND REMINISCENCES*

(New Delhi: Sarup Book Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 2010), pp.80, Rs.180.00

Gunjan Sushil

Deepika Srivastava, a Professor in the English Department of Allahabad University, has specialized in British Fiction and Indian English Literature. *Recollections and Reminiscences* is her first collection of fifty poems. Her versatility as a budding poet can well be perceived in the way in which she has divided her poems in seven categories, thus showing a gamut of emotions which is quite impressive.

The first part entitled "Dedication" consists of five poems, but the first two which she has dedicated to her mother and father respectively are, indeed, most touching. The last line of the poem "Mother", "Why have you gone away my Mother?", grips the very core of the heart of the reader; its appeal is universal as it arrests the entire being of *sahridaya* reader. Strangely enough, we do not find the same kind of genuineness and naturalness in any of the poems devoted to her father. The reason of this is hard to comprehend for us and can be known only from the poet.

"Passion", the second part of the collection, consists of love poems, some of which express the pain of parting. "Birthday Wishes" and "Rejoinder" strike a note of loneliness and separation whereas "Rhapsody" and "Eternal Love" are reminiscent of the sensuality of the poems of John Keats and Lord Byron. Their beauty lies in the fact that they appeal to anyone who has experienced the joy of loving and sorrow of losing; obviously, they are saturated with universality of appeal. The third part, "Exhilaration", contains poems about courage and optimism. "Looking Ahead" describes the pressures and tensions but ends with a will to live and succeed. "Wishful Thinking", another optimistic poem, expresses determination, especially in the line, "My efforts won't go un-noticed." In this poem and elsewhere too, one can easily discern the echoes of the great optimistic poet Robert Browning.

"Despondency", the fourth part, expresses both private and en-

demic sorrow. The poem which stands out in this section of the volume is "Success and Failure" and its last two lines are worth quoting and worth remembering, "Success has many fathers, while failure's an orphan." The fifth part, "Perpetuity", shows Deepika Srivastava's philosophical attitude towards life. "Tell Me Why" raises a number of profound questions pertaining to human existence which all of us have asked ourselves at one time or another but fail to get an answer. The poet, indeed, feels baffled by the riddles all around our ambience. "The Days of Yore" is an exquisite poem expressing the remorselessness and ravages of time. "Milieu" contains poems which reveal the corruption in rampant in society. "Dowry" as well as "The Girl", "Millionaires" and "Slum Dogs" show the vast disparity between the rich and the poor. Here one can easily trace Deepika Srivastava's humanitarianism. The last section, "Peregrination", consists of short lyrics which mostly record the author's visit to foreign lands, of which "Simply Seine" and "Lure of the Swiss Alps" are the most striking ones as they offer to the reader a vivid and colourful portrait of some of the coninent of Europe.

Recollectionsand Reminiscences is Deepika Srivastava's debut poetic collection, but it doubtless deserves commendation. The versatility and integrity, the depth of feelings,both joyful and sorrowful, depression ending in optimism(very much like P.B. Shelley's), the simplicity of the language, the naturalness of rhythm — all combine to prove that she is a poet who will surely measure new heights in the realm of Indian English poetry. I learn that another collection of her poems is almost on the verge of publication, and I believe it will lay bare some more facets of her blossoming poetic faculty. Poetry should be enjoyable (unfortunately much of the modern poetry lamentably lacks in it), and delight, not edification, is Deepika Srivastava's main strength which she transmits to the *sahradya* reader effortlessly and this makes her poems worthy of reading with pleasure again and again. Fortunately, the price of the volume is not such as a person may feel burden on his pocket while desiring to purchase it.

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