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A Spectrum of Indian English Literature

Part of the *Conflict and Development Series*

Series Editor: Otto F. von Feigenblatt, M.A.

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PREFACE

In today's literary scenario, Indian English Literature has attained immense popularity and widespread recognition. Gone are the days when it was regarded as a sub-standard variety of English or 'chee-chee English' or 'Babu English'. It is now being taught in many universities of the West, and is drawing readers from all over the world. Several prestigious international prestigious awards have been bagged by its highly talented authors, – Ruth Prabar Jhabvala, Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Aravind Adiga have all earned the most coveted Booker Prize. R.N. Tagore, V.S. Naipaul have both been honoured with the literary world's most glorious award, the Nobel Prize for Literature. Also, R.K. Narayan was admitted to America's National Academy of Letters. This long list of award-winners clearly demonstrates that the whole literary world has now recognized the worthwhile achievement of Indian English Literature.

Here is a collection of critical essays on Indian English literature by different scholars who have dealt with their subjects in a competent way. It contains thirteen essays *in toto* on diverse texts and authors. The first essay by L. Alterno critically examines Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) in the light of India's freedom struggle, the rise of Hindu nationalism, and the emergence of anti-colonial politics. The second essay by Jasbir Jain focuses exclusively on the women's writing today (in the first decade of the twenty-first century) in a perceptive manner. The third essay by

Pier Paolo Piciucco makes a clinical study of the two fictional works bearing almost the same title, *The Shadow Line*, – one by Joseph Conrad, and the other – *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh. The fourth one by A.N. Dwivedi minutely examines Jhumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) and closely analyses its text, story by story, before offering his comments on its content and form. The fifth essay by Gillian Dooley compares the letters of the Naipaul family with the fictional version of events in Naipaul's books, such as 'A House for Mr Biswas' and 'A Way in the World." The sixth essay by O.P. Budholia closely studies myth as the structure of meanings in Girish Karnad's *Yayati* (2008). The seventh essay by Ludmila Volná attempts to explore the value crisis in R.K. Narayan's *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* (1961), where Indian tradition faces challenges from the advancing forces of modernity. The eighth one by Jitendra Kumar concentrates on conflict and violence in Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964). The ninth one by Esterino Adami perceptively brings out the battle of Chromos and Kairos in Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996). The tenth essay by G.A. Ghanshyam suggests that Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown* (2005) is a triology of innocence, betrayal and new beginning. The eleventh essay by Nibedita Mukherjee traces the element of conflict in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), positing nationalism and transnationalism side by side and pinpointing the truth that a juxtaposition of the two causes much of the conflict in Desai's

novels. The twelfth one by Shaleen Singh takes into account the element of conflict found in Aravind Adiga's *Between the Assassinations* (2004). And the thirteenth and the last one by me pinpoints the fact the greater part of tension of tension and clash arises in Kamala Markandaya's *The Nowhere Man* (1972) owing to the East-West confrontation to be witnessed in it.

Evidently, the present collection is compiled with an avowed objective: to textually and contextually study the present day Indian English Literature, especially Fiction, *vis-à-vis* the theme of conflict and development in it. It is hoped, the collection will prove an invaluable assert to the literary world.

Allahabad (U.P.) INDIA ***Om Prakash Dwivedi***

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Chapter I

Re-constructed History in Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*: Dynamics of Hindu Nationalism and Anti-colonial Politics

Letizia Alterno

The entire narrative of Rao's novel *Kanthapura*, as several critics such as M.K. Naik and C.D. Narasimhaiah have pointed out, is constructed following a pattern which resembles the structure of Hindu storytelling, in particular of the style of the *Puranas*, which by tradition, among the creation of the universe and other stories, also recount the genealogies of specific Hindu deities. "There is no village in India, however mean," Raja Rao writes in his foreword to the novel, "that has not a rich *sthala-purana*, or legendary history, of its own."[i] Hence the village of Kanthapura represents no exception, and as an old grandmother-narrator tells us the story of her village, her telling transforms into legend and history becomes intertwined with myth.

Yet what is particularly remarkable of Rao's novel is not yet that it follows the pattern of a *sthala-purana* (the narrator is telling the story as if to a public audience surrounding her), but that the pattern itself which combines a *mélange* of fiction, history, and mythological digressions ultimately allows its author to intervene in the discourse of Western historiography by "setting things right," by giving an/other account of the socio-political events leading to the independence of India, more precisely that of the villagers of the imagined community of Kanthapura.

This paper analyses Rao's position towards the formation of an Indian nation during British colonialism suggesting that with this novel, belonging to the late 1930s hence to a period preceding Indian independence, Rao intervenes in the field of Western historiography mainly through an anti-colonial strategy, a deconstructive approach attempting, in Gayatri Spivak's words, "at displacing discursive fields."[ii] Although the novelist's strategy in *Kanthapura* differs considerably from the strategies employed in his later novels, which align themselves contextually to a more post-colonial response to history, it is possible to identify in this novel a first attempt, a willingness to intervene and disrupt Western historiographical accounts of British colonialism prior to the independence of India in 1947.

The writing of *Kanthapura* belongs indeed to a period which saw British and Indian histories intertwining in a Foucaudian game of knowledge and power the consequences of which are still evident in their respective national politics today. I read Rao's use of the historiographical mode in *Kanthapura* as a strategy to expose the limits of British accounts of colonial control in India, in an attempt to reveal, in Spivak's terms, "the edifice of historical truth."[iii] I will finally point out the risks involved in Rao's recovery of subaltern positive

subjects and illustrate the limits of his project of historiographical deconstruction.

Indeed, though hard for the inattentive reader to catch on a first reading of *Kanthapura*, Rao scatters explicit historical references throughout the novel to major political events and ideas happening in India roughly between 1920 and 1932. For example, a copy of Mahatma Gandhi's political philosophy as expressed in *My Experiments with Truth* (published in 1927) is purchased and commented by the protagonist Moorthy in the novel, while the Congress group constituted by the villagers of Kanthapura represents a regional variant of the All-India Congress Committee structure of the 1920s. Moreover, the numerous *hartal* or public demonstrations taking place amongst the villagers of Kanthapura recall similar demonstrations occurring all over India during Gandhi's Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movements launched between the 1920s and 1930s, as well as the description of the villagers' march against the British plantation owners which reminds the reader of the Dandi Salt march led by Gandhi in March 1930. Lastly, events such as the Gandhi-Irwin pact in March 1931, which put an end to the Civil Disobedience Movement and guaranteed the Congress' participation to the Second Round Table Conference held in London in 1931, together with the release of many Indian prisoners following the Disobedience Movement are recalled through several comments by the villagers towards the end of the novel, while the shift from communism towards a politics of socialism is represented by the fresh political wave of "equal-distributionism" initiated by Jawaharlal Nehru at the end of the story.

Yet strategically in the novel such events do not strictly follow a chronological order nor do they align themselves with a preordained structure. Rather, the originality of a novel such as *Kanthapura* lies in the fact that most events which refer to the history of India under British rule are carefully de-historicised and re-dimensioned from the wide domain of British historiography to the more localised context of a southern Indian village through a systematic attempt by the author to refer each recounted episode to the unbounded dimension of Hindu mythology.

An example is provided very early in the text, in a sort of preamble to the story that anticipates the main narrative events through the device of a *Harikatha*, a popular form of Hindu story telling in South India which mainly draws on religion, the epics, philosophy, incorporating music, drama, and dance. This device is used on several occasions in *Kanthapura* and allows Rao to summarise his/story of the Indian struggle against British rule in the following terms:

Far down on the Earth you chose as your chief daughter Bharatha, the goddess of wisdom and well-being. [...] But, O Brahma! [...] men have come from across the seas and the oceans to trample on our wisdom and to spit on virtue itself. They have come to bind us and to whip us, to make our women die

milkless and our men die ignorant. O Brahma! deign to send us one of your gods so that he may incarnate on Earth and bring back light and plenty to our enslaved daughter…' […] 'Siva himself will forthwith go and incarnate on the Earth and free my beloved daughter from her enforced slavery. (11)

The allusion to the enslavement and exile of India here is also to be referred to the epic of the *Ramayana* and to the rescue of *Rama*'s wife *Sita*, prisoner of the demon king *Ravana*. Furthermore the image of the British rulers coming "from across the seas and oceans" to "trample," "spit," "bind," "whip," and "enslave" India certainly discredits Orientalist accounts from the nineteenth century which depict the coloniser as a source of knowledge and enlightenment for the colonised, bearing the weight of what Rudyard Kipling called "the white man's burden."

An example is provided by James Mill's description of Lord Hastings' administration of the government of British India from 1814 to 1823, a depiction in line with the Samaritan and benevolent esprit of the white coloniser:

[Lord Hastings] was not indifferent to the good opinion of those subordinate to his station or subject to his authority, and sought it not only by the splendour of his military triumphs, the comprehensiveness of his foreign policy, or the diligence, wisdom, and rectitude of his civil administration, but by considerations for the feelings, and anxiety for the prosperity and happiness, of every order of society. […] and no sacrifice of personal comfort or convenience deterred Lord Hastings from promoting, by his participation and encouragement, whatever was projected for the diffusion of benevolence, the cultivation of knowledge, and the general good and happiness of the community."[iv]

To make a link with the politics of the world we are living in, I would like to attempt a comparison with the imperialistic policies of contemporary USA. George W. Bush' appeal to the American nation on March 19th 2003, when the US officially declared war to Iraq, bears a significant resemblance with the rhetoric of the colonising mission of British imperialism in India back in the nineteenth century:

We come to Iraq with respect for its citizens, for their great civilization and for the religious faiths they practice. We have no ambition in Iraq, except to remove a threat and restore control of that country to its own people.

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The enemies you confront will come to know your skill and bravery. The people you liberate will witness the honorable and decent spirit of the American military. […]
And helping Iraqis achieve a united, stable and free country will require our sustained commitment.[v]

In this context, to close this polemical digression, with all possible contextual differences and rather reductively, we may imagine Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* as controversial a book as Michael Moore's *Stupid White Men*. In the quoted passage from *Kanthapura* Rao's selection of verbs serves as a parodic contrast to Mill's exceedingly eulogising words, highlighting the hypocrisy of the enlightening coloniser's mission that does not in fact bring any good to the "enslaved" country. In the particular case of *Kanthapura*, the exploited coolies find themselves subjugated and ill-treated by the tyranny and physical violence of the Skeffington coffee plantation Sahib, who abuses their women and pays them a misery to get by. In the quoted passage this is further stressed by the fact that women and men will die "milkless" and "ignorant." On the Sahib, the narrator Achakka says:

He does not beat like his old uncle, nor does he refuse to advance money; but he will have this woman and that woman, this daughter and that wife, and every day a new one and never the same two within a week. (59)

In *Kanthapura* the burden is indeed the black man's, as the white man – or better the "Red-man," as Rao points out, is shown to fierily extirpate the light of knowledge and wisdom from India with his stereotypical ignorance of and disrespect for the customs and cultures of India.

Part of Rao's mythologising project is the fact that in the novel the geographical confines of India are dispersed in its prosopopoeial correlative *Bharatha*, daughter of *Brahma* – as illustrated in the quoted passage. Significantly, Rao qualifies India as the goddess of wisdom and well-being (*Bharati* is also another appellative for the goddess *Saraswati*), and it is in contrast with colonial nineteenth-century accounts such as Mill's that the author makes "her" appear (note the female subject here, a recurring attribute in Hindu nationalist discourse) as an enslaved creature under the wicked influence and power of the British demons.

This move by Rao who, it is important to underline, wrote and published the novel before India reached independence (in 1938), and in London, is certainly an anti-colonial move by a novelist at that time very much involved in the politics of underground activities against British rule in India. *Kanthapura* belongs indeed to a phase in Rao's writing which is overtly anti-colonial and which attempts to intervene in the discourse of Western historiography by giving the villagers' account of *what happened* during that particular period of Indian history. The exploitation of the Indian colony by the British, especially

in the cotton production, is expressed by Moorthy in the novel in a way which is made graspable for paddy-growers like Nose-scratching Nanjamma:

'Imagine, sister,' says he [Moorthy], seating himself, 'you grow rice in the fields. Then you have mill agents that come from Sholapur and Bombay and offer you very tempting rates. […] Then they take it away and put it into huge mills brought from their own country and run by their own men – and when the rice is husked and washed and is nothing but pulp, they sell it to Banya Ramanlal or Chotalal […] then you have no rice before harvests, and there's your granddaughter's marriage, for example […] and you pay one rupee for every three and a half seers.' (17-18)

Moorthy's story here is a narrativised account of the anti-foreign cloth campaign launched by Gandhi, which cost him a fine and arrest in 1929 for burning foreign cloth in Calcutta. Accounts such as this are aplenty in the novel and can be read as discursive interventions on the time and space of past events belonging to pre-independent India that allow a process of historiographical re-inscription. In the light of Bhabha's elaboration of "time-lag" as the prompt for "the process of historical revision and the production of political and cultural agency"[vi] we could interpret Rao's move as a strategic re-inscription of the problematic events preceding the independence of India in 1947 which is meant to counterpoise the version of British accounts of the same with that of the villagers from *Kanthapura*. This acts of "rememoration," as Bhabha calls them, help Rao to fictionally recover "what has been excluded, excised, evicted"[vii] from history. In the novel this is stressed by Rao when his protagonist confronts his own governmental forces – strategically empowered by the British in a Macaulayan-style mediation between them and the people: "'*I am a free man*, Police Sahib. *I can speak*, says Moorthy'" (62; my emphasis). Moorthy is thus entitled a voice and speaks for himself, being aware of his human rights when he reminds the policeman that "[a]ccording to the laws of your own Government and that of Mr Skeffington no man can own another" (62).

The risk of this recovery of the subaltern as a positive subject which is part of the deconstructive process though is to let the recovered subject function as a new empowered agent of the discourse thus reconstructing and reiterating the game of knowledge as power. Gayatri Spivak warns the deconstructive historian against the hegemony of the restored subaltern's subject position in history that should always remain "strategic" and not constitute the "inalienable and final truth of things."[viii]

Hence in *Kanthapura* although Rao's strategy enables him to give voice to the subaltern villagers, to make them speak, we should not forget that we are dealing with fictional voices that though empowered within the narrative discourse may still remain without a documented historical say.

The originality of Rao's response to British colonialism, which although remaining primarily confined within a response-mode of rejection of the British

coloniser, participates in the discourse of history through the giving presence to the otherwise missing voices of the subaltern villagers of *Kanthapura*, re-establishing them as positive rather than negative (in the sense of non-existent) historical subjects. Though running the risk of objectifying the subaltern in *Kanthapura* Rao's merit is to have empowered those voices and to have let them speak against, or in favour as some of his characters do, of British rule, anticipating in 1938, the hopes, frustrations, and expectations of what would come almost ten years later: "They say" – Achakka tells us – "the Mahatma will go to the Red-man's country and he will get us Swaraj" (189).

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[i] Raja Rao, *Kanthapura*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: *Oxford University Press*, 2000) v. Subsequent references are to be referred to this edition and will be indicated within the text.

[ii] Ranajit Guha, and Gayatri Spivak eds., *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: OUP, 1988) 9.

[iii] Spivak 7.

[iv] James Mill, *The History of British India*, 3 vols. (1818; London: Madden, Piper & Spence, 1858) 417-18.

[v] George W. Bush, "Operation Iraqi Freedom Address," *The White House*, 19 March 2003 http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030319-17.html

[vi] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) 284.

[vii] Bhabha 284.

[viii] Spivak 17.

Chapter II

A Point of Time: Women's Writing Today

Jasbir Jain

This paper is specifically focused on the immediate present, this stepping in into a new millennium ushered in with a lot of excitement and which in the near decade which we are about to complete has thrown up a lot of challenges. The literary world has fielded a rich and varied crop. Actually a fairly mixed one, uneven in literary merit and signifying shifts in writing strategies, readerships and critical approaches. How do we evaluate the immediate present? Any why do we do it? What are our expectations from new writings? Are we looking for reflections of our reality or for directions for action or for expansion of our imagination? More interestingly, what inspires or motivates this writing? Is it the need for expression, visibility, a deeply felt sense of disillusionment or simply a salability?

Having discarded the concept of authorial intention in the construction of meaning, we are now compelled to place the literary text within other intentions – external to its meaning but evident in its framing. For a moment, I want to dwell on the gender dimension as we are concerned with women's writing. Is it different from those of men in its framings and concerns? Amidst a range of writing from ex IITians and Management graduates, we have a solitary woman representative who has registered her presence by a mediocre recollection of her background. Such shifts demand a closer attention. Is location in gender a defining limit?

Locations are necessary but at times they become prisons or begin to function as blinkers. Situations become repetitive. The critic more than the writer needs to free her perceptions from subjective concerns primarily located in gender. Beyond a certain point, it becomes a case of obsessive concern with the self and leads to a kind of inbreeding between writer and subject at one level and writer and critic at another. Location, in whatever form it may be, has a significant impact on the nature of both writing and evaluation – as one can see in the case of feminist writing.[1] Just as it was for the critics, located in the seventies, to go back to nineteenth century texts to unearth their subtexts and free them from interpretations located within domestic realism, it is for the modern-day feminist critics to expand their strategies of reading in order to liberate contemporary women's writing from overworked gender concerns. Locations, no matter how important, never exist as islands, they interact with an outer world. Other locations which need to be reviewed are diasporic and linguistic ones. Cultural representation is strongly impacted by them. Diasporic writers frame and diffuse cultural themes in order to reach foreign audiences. Whether they admit it or not, the lens is distant from the raw reality of political events and smoothens out the complexities of myths and, very often, frames them as isolated symbols as Kali and Sita in order to organize narratives of female strength and purity. The multi-layered nuances and references are not built into the larger narrative. The writer who lives in

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India and writes in English weaves in the symbols, myths and cultural meanings in multiple ways as Githa Hariharan and Shashi Deshpande do or the writer coalesces history into the narrative pattern as Sahgal does. Moving a step further, the gap between writers writing in English and their conscious act of translation, as Deshpande[2] and others have often stated, and the writer writing in some other Indian language also needs to be recognized. Bama's or Mahasweta's or Krishna Sobti's works project a cultural density, not so evident in the other two categories, namely writers writing in English in India and those who belong to the diaspora. The diasporic text diffuses culture, the Indian writer in English builds in references, but the actually, 'translated' text, through another's interpretation, explains, glosses and varies in emphasis. There are, as Himani Banerjee has observed,[3] holes and gaps in the text and as Arun Prabha Mukherjee has pointed out, a host of inaccuracies. Any act of interpretation has to contend with these differences of location and of language. She asks whether a certain loss of meaning is inevitable to the act of translation.[4]

Gender, like any other cultural artifact, is constructed through patriarchy, religion, social kinships and practices. There is no way we can or should limit it to merely a passive position. The moment, the role of an individual agency comes in, the issues of morality and resistance demand attention. But are they enough in themselves in order to open out a text? Or does the problematization of these lead us into the blind alley of postcolonialism, or at best postmodernism? Is there no need to engage with the patronymics of theory?

When we turn to the very contemporary, even as we seek for cultural legitimacy our expectations are wide-ranging — newness, difference, interaction with the global, new narrative strategies, potential classics and perhaps new reading strategies. I'm not quite sure whether we should persist in working within postcolonial and postmodern constructs. How do we open out a text in or order to explore its pre-texts, its sub-texts and co-texts? When a university department focuses on such a theme, its own sub -text is laced with a concern for evaluative and research methodologies. We are aware that aesthetic judgments are easily upset by publicity hypes, publishers' advances and literary awards. The flood of essays and descriptive writing on *The God of Small Things* and *The Inheritance of Loss* is an evidence of this. Perhaps the only way one can guard against an over-exuberance is by locating a text either within or against a literary tradition; a text never exists in isolation. Moreover, a critic needs constantly to question the positions outlined in the text.

At times, when I am engaged in the reading of a text, or a critical piece on it, a sudden realization takes place that the reader is, at her own level, simulating the act of writing, which is somewhat different from the hermeneutic process. Our relation to the text as readers is never one of 'innocent' reading; most of the time we are reconstructing our own world with the support of the text. The 'newness' of the text has to speak to us in larger terms than the merely 'subjective' or the personal; it has to move us out of our passivity. The act of 'simulation' is what Barthes described as the result of a readerly text, different from both his concept of the writerly text and

Toni Morrison's writerly reading.[5] While Barthes requires the participation of an interactive reader as a co-producer of meaning, he lays the responsibility on the writer's attitude, Morrison shifts the ground to the act of reading and when as a writer she reads the text as if she was behind the writing, this reading compels her to explore its pre-texts, sub-texts as well as inter-texts, allowing her insight into cultural processes and working with the absences in the narrative. The act of 'simulation', on the other hand, is a passive surrender, which abandons its critical antennae and lingers on the realistic presentation. At best it creates a parallel text looking for similarities in one's own contexts. It makes no return into a larger critical process. Very likely I'm overstating, but the critical faculty has to be sharp enough to enter into a dialogic process with the text.

Gayatri Spivak has described the feminist movement as one which blurs the boundaries between the personal and the political in several of her essays on feminist writing as well as in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. I would like to take this statement back by more than half-a-century and relate it to Orwell's belief that all writing is political, which he too asserted over and over again. Today there is no getting away from the politics evident in the very act of writing whether it is feminist, dalit, third world or is representative of cultural and nation-constructs.

Obviously, calendar shifts do not suddenly mark a defining line. There are continuities as well as disruptions and explorations into other worlds. Some novels which have held my attention and expand existing areas are Meher Pestonji's *Pervez* (2003), Rupa Bajwa's *The Sari Shop* (2003), Esther David's *Book of Esther* (2003) and Jhumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008). Creative continuities are perceptible in Sahgal's *Lesser Breeds* (2003) and Shashi Deshpande's *In the Country of Deceit* (2008). Another kind of writing, which perpetuates existing patterns without necessarily adding anything of value, is the writing of Manju Kapur, who in novel after novel, reworks the Ruth Jhabvala formula through a native-born Indian's eyes and Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) which carries forward the Naipaulian disbelief in India's future.

Writing at a time when the nation was caught in the act of redefining itself through a variety of means – violence, laws, economic liberation and literature – both Esther David and Meher Pestonji work with histories and social realities which expand the idea of a nation. Esther David, continuing her engagement with Bene-Israeli origins, moves from autography to community and to a place in the nation. *Book of Esther* is significant for more than one reason. It not only compels recognition of a neglected minority which has belonged to the soil for several centuries, but also experiments with narrative structures as they embody cultural absorption into the main flow. Travelling through several generations, it records the shifts from a Konkani village to Mumbai and other urban locations. Each chapter begins with a recipe and as the cooking ingredients are used to prepare a dish, names of spices, vegetables, varieties of fish bring alive a whole culture. Just as plants and cuisines have been transplanted and have histories, human beings have also migrated along with their

pasts. This migratory route now travels inland and becomes an inward journey of adjustment and growth.

Meher Pestonji's *Pervez* breaks new ground as she extends the sense of nationhood first by moving outside Parsi environs, then by placing Pervez, a young Parsi woman, recently divorced from her Goanese husband, Fred, amidst people who are engaged in political and ideological battles, who while living in conditions almost of semi-poverty are motivated to work for higher goals. As she shifts from her brother's home to an independent flat in the university neighbourhood and begins work for a degree in Psychology, Pervez finds herself being caught in the Mumbai violence of 1992 and 1993 and Dharavi, the biggest slum of Asia. Here she runs into people from her past – an old Parsi relative, a family from Goa and the human goodness that dwells in the slums.

Pervez's journey is multi-directional as almost all institutional structures such as family, marriage, religion, and ideology reveal their cracks. It is journey away from a cloistered existence within a community, to one which is thronged with multiple problems of relationships, politics and economic strife. The tears in the fabric of the nation are more than visible. How does one mend them is the larger question that Pestonji addresses. Aesthetically the novel leaves much to be desired, but with its thematic relevance to our present, it captures the reader's attention. As boundaries are crossed or erased, as sexualities are negotiated, institutional frameworks and social prejudices are also questioned, opened out or demolished. The novel is also about not being afraid. Pestonji breaks away from the now narrowing world of the Parsi novels to re-locate herself in a larger concept. Her second novel, *Sadak Chhaap(2005),* proceeds to work with the experiences of a young street urchin at the receiving end in an exploitative society .

The political concerns of Meher Pestonji are in direct line of another writer, Nayantara Sahgal, whose *Lesser Breeds* also appeared in 2003. Sahgal traces the history of India's freedom struggle through the Nehru-Gandhi dichotomy, working primarily through the consciousness of the bastard child, Nurullah (literally, the light of Allah) born of a rape. Learner and tutor both, he is an observer-participant as well as an explorer for alternative modes of knowledge in a world controlled by the imperial masters. Sahgal's continued preoccupation with the biography of a nation deserves more attention than the works of metaphors of loss. These women writers, located in India and living everyday within its political conflict are looking for answers in solidarity, humanism and in reaching across to the other, contrast with this the thematic thrust of Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, which follows the Naipaulian pattern laid out so clearly in his two novels- *Half a Life* (2001) and *Magic Seeds* (2004). Naipaul's message is that India is a country of failed revolutions. Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* repeats this with her narrative of a judge stuck in the Raj era, in the 'Koi hai' past, a cook strongly reminiscent of Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain,* illegal immigrants and the GLF movement along with its comic episodes. Then there is the 17-year old Sai, cast in the granddaughter's role. The novel is true to its title: it

has picked up all the negative features and has painted grey zones which shade off into an incoherent babbling.

These novels raise significant issues about the nature of reality, which is never of the same kind. Writers have been criticized for their preoccupation with the real, and the unstated assumption is that creativity has to take us into higher zones of imagination. But the fictional world takes in many realms. Even as it works with history, memory and the past, even as it shapes nostalgia into a narrative, or projects the world into future time, it works with 'reality' and uses it in different ways such as experiential narratives, detailed description of landscapes, recreating visual memories reflecting concern with environment, coalescing several events together and integrating them, psychological realism which works with human emotions and responses, and at some point it also shifts into fantasy and other imaginary constructs, which do not fall into magic realism. Recurring dreams, psychological fears, even memory, which by its nature is selective and differently perceived by different people, are real enough in themselves, but nevertheless they disrupt the realistic narrative. Deshpande's *Moving On* is a beautiful example of the wide encompassing of memory as it renders the real fluid, unstable and multiple. Projection into another's reality is an act of empathy and reaching across. If Meher Pestonji opens out the slums for Pervez, Rupa Bajwa walks across to a male protagonist from a lower urban class, through Ramchand, a sari salesman in *The Sari Shop,* a move which allows her to debate issues like education, class, capitalism and culture.

Once again, I return to Kiran Desai, in order to demonstrate what goes wrong when an immigrant depicts home through a foreign lens. We have, on one hand, writers like Amitav Ghosh, who work outwards from their Indianness, on the other we also have a fairly large number of writers who use Indian pasts for myth-making such as Chitra Divakaruni and Bharati Mukherjee. Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* (2004), like its earlier predecessor *The Mistress of Spices* (1997), projects a self-contained romantic world. In these novels Divakaruni has shifted her gaze from issues like arranged marriages and the women trapped in domesticity to a re-imagining of the legendary past. But in between there is Jhumpha Lahiri who, in each successive work, integrates the past into the immigrant's present as kinship patterns, family relationships and sexualities are explored. I was critical of *The Interpreter of Maladies*, lukewarm towards *The Namesake*, but the stories in *Unaccustomed Earth* touch both the mind and the heart. They are stories of immigrant lives which, growing distant from the home country, find new patterns of human relationships as cultural mores are constantly under review and revision. The writing of the diaspora may often be preoccupied with interior worlds; it also acts as a mirror reflection of an in-between passage, yet evaluatory strategies can ill afford to ignore the fact of location . The writer's relationship ,as reflected in the text, acquires significance. A novel I'd like to draw attention to is Anita Rau Badami's *Can You Hear The Nightbird Call?(*2006), which traces Sikh history right from Komagatamaru through the partition of India, Punjab militancy, the '84 Delhi riots to the diasporic movement and the '85 air crash. It flows into history even as it works with the narrative of a family, sibling rivalry, guilt and expiation. From a story it becomes a discourse.

Chapter II

Sexual mores are also under review in the writing at home. The two latest novels of Shashi Deshpande – *Moving On* (2004) and *In The Country of Deceit* (2008) – are about single women, one widowed the other unmarried. Both are women who want to be independent, who are living outside joint families or marriage, yet both need to negotiate their emotional and sexual needs. *Moving On* works through contrapuntal narrative voices. First person narration is interleafed with Baba's Diary and emotional situations are woven into the theme of land mafia and childhood friendships, dreams are juxtaposed with hard reality and stories of three generations are heaped one upon the other. Between them they reflect on the art of writing just as *Small Remedies* had focused on the nature of writing auto and biographies. Deshpande is obsessed with the written word, which even as it is etched, is elusive in its meaning. And time is another equally dominant concern. One is never far away from the passage of time, as every moment the present turns into its own past, just as one is never far from extinction, death and mortality. Manjari's is the narrative voice as she journeys twice-over the same ground, first as traveller then as a distant recollector putting the pieces together bit by bit. It is here that the several folds of reality are unfolded as the narrative shifts through the different layers – the visible, the real, the hidden undercurrents of the real -- which once they surface alter the perception of those events. The truth is that the eye never sees anything in its totality or wholeness (104). Neither pictures nor perceptions are enough by themselves. *Moving On* has all the elements of a detective story as clues from the past and voices from the inner consciousness come together. A married home comes into being not merely as a branching off but by disrupting the continuity of the parental family. There is resentment, homesickness, replacement. At one point in the novel, Manjari reflects that the difference between fission and fusion is immense, it is the difference between harmony and chaos. (105).

Often Deshpande works with sisters, two friends or sisters-in-law. They are opposites, contrasts – one knowing her mind, the other directionless. *In a Country of Deceit* we have Savi who gets married and goes away and Devyani who presides over the remains of the family house where she puts together bits of family history and a whole gallery of character portraits, until she falls in love with a married man and gets involved in proxy scripting a screen play featuring mature lovers, people in their thirties and forties (139). There is in this a shift in the very idea of romance, a shift reflected parallel in time in the films *Pyar Mein Twist* and *Cheeni Kum* and earlier worked on in *Moving On.* Personal narratives in Deshpande's work spill over into socio-political spaces – bomb explosions, Hindu-Muslim riots, labor unions, rape, slum-areas, builders' mafia and interventions through media. These spaces make room for confrontations and questionings.

As we look at the work of women writers in this first decade of the 21st century, the shifts in the feminist vision are more than visible. They have moved from the subjective towards a larger social canvas, crossed over to positions which empathize with the vulnerability of all human beings irrespective of sex, are less inhibited about emotional and sexual lives, and have acquired a new sense of subject-hood. Social and

religious institutions as imagined and crafted by patriarchy are no longer taken as the given. Women's writing has moved beyond concerns with the self and the other.

As I have been talking to you, I have all along been debating in my mind – what is it that adds value to a poem, a play or a novel? What is it that gives it relevance not only for us but for others? How do we read a work to be able to fathom its significance? – one that is beyond mere liking or disliking? All writing does not carry a message; all writing does not necessarily experiment. It becomes experimental when it shakes us out of our lethargy, it becomes meaningful when it touches a chord in our lives – no matter whether it works through fantasy, realism, experience or myths. It becomes significant when it brings together our fears, our insecurities and our indecisions, when it unravels at least part of the mystery of life and accommodates the individual sensibility in a wider humanistic discourse. As women writers move outside cloistered environs, the realization that the normative morality defined by patriarchy is often in conflict with values of compassion and understanding, values important for relationships and for life to accommodate the challenge of continuity become evident. But though a hint at a philosophical debate is present in Deshpande's *A Matter of Time,* we still await writing that moves us out of our comfort zones, which carries within it a potential classic and which interacts without being defensive about its 'difference'. Writing in Indian languages other than English has a long list of classics, but we have not yet been able to transcend the limits of our locations. I humbly suggest that the necessary critical sharpness to make this possible has yet to come into being, that research has to open out in directions which allow the Indian writer to step outside defensive and explanatory postures. The researcher needs to contextualize, engage in bibliographical and encyclopedic work as well interrogate theoretical formations.

Endnotes

[1]Shashi Deshpande in her essays included in *Writing from the Margin and Other Essays*.(New Delhi:Viking, 2003), emphasizes this aspect over and over again as Bhabha in *The Location Of Culture (*London:Rouledge,1994) had done earlier.

[2] Both the diaspora as well as the writers writing in English located in India have often acknowledged the fact of being 'translated' writers. It is a long list – Rushdie, Deshpande, Vikram Seth all have said so at some time or the other.

[3] For more details refer Arun Prabha Mukherjee's *Oppositional Aesthetics:Readings from a Hyphenated Space* (Toronto:Tsar,1994) especially "On Reading Renu:Text/ Language/Culture/t\Translation",
and my essay "Rethinking the Diaspora" in the second volume of the 3-volume *The Expatriate Indian Writing in English*. Eds. T.Vinoda and P Shailaja (New Delhi: Prestige, 2006), pp.23-37.

[4] Himani Bannerjee quoted by Arun Prabha Mukherjee in her Introduction to *Her Mother's Ashes*. Ed. Nurjehan Aziz (Toronto:Tsar,1994),xii.

[5] Refer Barthes's *S/Z : An Essay* (1974) and Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* (1994).

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Chapter III

Conrad's *The Shadow-Line* and Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*: a Comparative Analysis of the Politics of Colonialist and Postcolonial Fictions

Pier Paolo Piciucco

Recent postcolonial studies have focussed on the close relationship – direct parentage in some cases – between the fictional texts written in various phases of the colonial era and the responses now being produced by authors coming from countries which once belonged to the colonial Empire. The comparative perspective in the analysis of these two closely related strands of literature is crucial in that it makes it possible to study the way in which the politics of postcolonial texts are the basis of an adversarial rhetoric that, to borrow a term coined by Rushdie, writes back to the canonical English text. The aim of the present paper is to throw light on the particular affiliation connecting Conrad's *The Shadow-Line* and Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, not only because – as I shall shortly try to demonstrate – the opposition between these two texts may represent the quintessential example of how the postcolonial has possibly countered colonial(ist) discourse, thereby defining a textual area in which refreshing notions of identity can be examined, but also because to my knowledge literary criticism has done very little to disclose what really spurred Amitav Ghosh to clearly and provocatively allude to Conrad's novella in the choice of its pluralized form for the title of his novel. My interest in this sense is not new. It dates back to the time of my Ph.D. studies when I had the chance to meet and interview Ghosh while he was travelling in Italy. After considering the blank that literary critics had left to explain the reasons why Ghosh had chosen to entitle his novel after Conrad's novella, I decided to ask him directly. His answer was, to put it mildly, disappointing: "You know, when I finished writing the novel I gave my manuscript to a friend with a number of possible titles. Instead, what she proposed to me was *The Shadow Lines*. I liked it and that was it."[1]

A comparative study of Conrad's adventure story and Ghosh's postcolonial criss-cross of stories instead reveals that the two texts share a remarkable number of analogies and that the prevailing discourses in Conrad's novella are almost systematically opposed in Ghosh's reworking, following what is now widely recognised as mainstream postcolonial ethics. To start with, what these two fictions have in common is their astonishing ability to carry on different discourses on various levels:

[1] PIER PAOLO PICIUCCO. "Pier Paolo Piciucco Interviews Amitav Ghosh" in *Englishes*, pp. 66-72. These lines do not appear in the published interview because I found Ghosh's answer to my question evasive and irritating.

if this appears to be almost taken for granted in *The Shadow Lines*, since it is an elaborate narrative which develops an amazing net of nexuses between characters, situations, time planes and places, it is also characteristic of the structure of *The Shadow-Line*. At first, this may be surprising because Conrad's novella seems to be less articulated than Ghosh's novel: it in fact appears as a story with a linear plot related by a single narrator in chronological order, a fictional exercise quite unlike Conrad's famous novels whose plots unfold following a disrupted chronology, *Lord Jim* for instance. This may be a reason why *The Shadow-Line* has generally attracted less attention from critics than other works by Conrad, and if this can be at least justified when the counterpoint is a masterpiece such as *Lord Jim*, it is a mystery why it has been given so little consideration even within the more restricted field of Conrad's shorter fiction. If my purpose were to arouse heated debate among Conrad scholars, I could even go on and provocatively argue that the attention bestowed on *Heart of Darkness* is unjustified and disproportionate if compared to the narrow array of essays and evaluations that *The Shadow-Line* has elicited.

The Shadow-Line in fact, despite its appearance, is an intricate and elaborate fiction which develops on at least three different discursive levels and is able, amazingly enough, to recount three different stories at the same time: it is evidently an adventurous sea story; it is also an engaging account of an encounter between East and West under the British Empire; last but not least, it is a confessional tale, as its author dared to declare. Written in the later part of Conrad's artistic career, at the time when he had already reached the peak of artistic maturity, it displays the full potential of an author who effectively manages to master a dense three-layered fiction disguised in the form of an (almost) unpretentious tale.

The plot follows the adventurous episodes which occur to a young Western officer during two crucial and metaphorical journeys in the Orient: the first, from Singapore to Bangkok, is on board the Melita and carries him to Bangkok where he finds the Vidar, on which he starts his second voyage, this time as captain of the ship. Since the second voyage follows the Bangkok-Singapore route, we can speak of it as a return journey the protagonist accomplishes. The structure of the novella makes this fact evident as it is divided into six chapters: the first three follow the protagonist during his outward journey; the last three see him on his homeward journey. It is here that the analogies with *The Shadow Lines* start. The structure of Ghosh's novel has clearly involved a re-writing of the colonial-era novella, with two parts (one with 16 and the other with 15 sections) called 'Going Away' and 'Coming Home', echoing the theme of the return journey. My opinion in fact is that in Ghosh's novel these two headings, beyond re-mapping the postcolonial world with an impressive (and disorienting) net of crossings, directly call into question what Thieme has aptly named the literary "English parent,"[2] Conrad's *The Shadow-Line*. Theories as to why Ghosh may have chosen these headings for the two parts of his novel have been formulated

[2] JOHN THIEME. *Post-colonial Con-texts. Writing Back to the Canon*. London, Continuum, 2001, p. 13.

by some scholars[3] but, although these interpretations bring some key points in the novel to the surface, I do not find them exhaustive. It is the structure itself of the two fictional works that creates a net of correspondences underlying the affiliation at the roots of this relationship.

However, more than simply sharing similar structures, the two narratives seem to be thoroughly committed to an insightful examination of what we could call the politics of the journey, one from a colonial and the other from a postcolonial stance. What in my point of view has been largely underestimated by scholars who have done comparative analyses of the two works, is that *The Shadow-Line* describes a return journey that finds the whole of its geographical scenario in the East. Although this cannot be considered an exceptional case in Conrad's fiction, it is not a common occurrence either. If we consider *Lord Jim* and *Heart of Darkness*, possibly Conrad's two most famous works, we find that England and/or other European countries play a part in them, albeit a minor one in comparison to the descriptions of the events which occur in the colonies. *Heart of Darkness*, in particular, rightly described by Thieme as "a litmus test for debates around European constructions of 'otherness', as well as issues relating to colonialism more generally,"[Thieme, 2001: 16] is also a description of a return journey. It begins however along the banks of the Thames, finds dramatic development and captivating significance in the wild, unexplored jungles of Black Africa, but closes the circle and approaches a solution back home in London, with the famous, convenient lie to the protagonist's Intended. In short, it is a journey moving from the centre of the Empire to its colonial periphery and finding coronation back in the West. Return journey is not therefore a concept that always has the same meaning in Conrad. As this comparison clearly demonstrates, in *The Shadow-Line* our interest is exclusively concentrated on a crucial challenge that takes place entirely in the colonized world. The colonizer's world does not even appear and is not even used as a foil to establish an orientation point for Conrad's contemporary reader, although this technique was used fairly frequently in colonial(ist) fiction. The mapping of the Orient, so extreme are the conditions in which Conrad projects us, does not even necessitate another reference point to allow readers to clearly orient themselves. Conrad's Orient in *The Shadow-Line*, with its mesmerizing, alluring, nightmarish set of obscure images, is, in my opinion, in the whole of Conrad's literary production possibly one of the most engaging descriptions of the mindscape colonial adventurers (as well as English readers at home) dared challenge, map and claim. The mapping of the Orient without providing the support of an at least minimal set of comparative notions about

[3] Amina Amin ("Going Away/Coming Home: Points of Fixity or Shadow Lines." *The Fiction of Amitav Ghosh,* edited by Indira Bhatt and Indira Nityanandam, New Delhi, Creative Books, 2001, pp.55-56) argues that the first part of the novel examines "the dispersal of his characters across continents", while the second deals with "the post-colonial cultural displacement and the loss of the cultural commonality of the sub-continent". Novy Kapadia ("Political Freedom and Communal Tension in *The Shadow Lines*" *The Fiction of Amitav Ghosh,* edited by Indira Bhatt and Indira Nityanandam, New Delhi, Creative Books, 2001, p. 84) instead maintains that the division of the two parts originates from the nature and the destination of the journeys: in the first section, the author focuses his attention on the episodes occurring in England, whereas "[i]n the second section of the novel, 'Coming Home', Ghosh returns to the Indian subcontinent, to Calcutta and Dhaka".

the prevailing centre attempts to recreate in the mind of the reader the same psychological setting as that of the original explorer, whose immediate task when in trouble was to bravely face and fight the Orient and do his best to save his bacon, without being overly concerned about comparative or philosophical assessments with the motherland. These remained very instructive and important but could wait to be evaluated stress-free once he was safe and the difficulties had been successfully overcome. This kind of fictional return journey therefore throws readers into the same emotional state as that of the first explorer and makes them such through the act of reading itself. Seen from this perspective, it is easy to understand why Ghosh's friend suggested he target this work among the many by Conrad which deal with the Oriental world.

Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* is in fact concerned with the mapping of the globalized world, a world in which the formerly (or new or post, or whatever we wish to call it) colonized live among the formerly (or new or post) colonizer. There is more. Although dividing lines invariably end up separating powerful from powerless both in the colonial and postcolonial world, the postcolonial writer strives to stress that these shadow lines have become porous and individuals can now cross them. The ironic example of Tha'mma flying to Dhaka and being disappointed at finding that no red boundary lines mark the frontier between India and Bangladesh has been underscored by many commentators. Such evaluations lead us to make further comparisons between the ways in which the two authors – and two different attitudes to approaching alterity – make use of the politics of travelling. If, as we have seen, in *The Shadow-Line* the colonial(ist) and expansionist hunger develops the trope of travelling as a clear metaphor for conquest and domination, *The Shadow Lines*, on the other hand, is a narration in which there are countless crossings, employed to bridge difference between and join people from different cultures, sexes, races, generations and backgrounds. Concisely, Ghosh sees travel as a metaphor for communication whereas in Conrad's novella travel creates the conditions needed to establish a system capable of generating wealth.

Closely connected to an analysis of how the politics of travelling divide Conrad and Ghosh, is a brief evaluation of how these two writers make totally complementary use of a decisive factor influencing their respective traveller's approach to their voyage: imagination. The unnamed narrator in *The Shadow-Line* is a young, inexperienced man who, as F.R. Lewis has pointed out, is symbolically about to undertake a "*rite de passage*."[4] Although he appears to be the typical courageous colonial hero, his traditional task is veiled by an oppressive, pessimistic aura of darkness which scholars have tended to view as a result of Conrad's outlook and the poetics of the Modern Age, so that, despite his evident positive qualities such as courage, determination and a cool head, the narrator's young self unequivocally appears to be

[4] F.R. LEWIS. *Anna Karenina and Other Essays*. London, Chatto & Windus, 1967, p.100.

fearful. Conrad's genius, as Wayne C. Booth[5] has shown, lies in showing rather than telling the reader how faint-hearted the hero grew as the fatal encounter was about to or was actually taking place. *The Shadow-Line*'s Orient, a distorted and surreal mindscape, is also and most importantly the literary and creative end-product of a terrifying fear that possessed the explorer/colonizer as he first acquainted himself with the Other, as well as a symbolic representation of an enemy contrasting the fairy-tale hero in his ordeal. Imagination, as a consequence, enables the (crafty) colonial narrator to artistically disguise the colonizer's inappropriate panic and re-shape it according to an accepted colonial stereotype. I would argue, therefore, that *The Shadow-Line*'s Orient is equivalent to and articulates in words the same fear of the Other that 18th- and 19th-century European cartographers used to represent with all kinds of frightful marine monsters, huge sea snakes and deformed hungry whales that appeared mounting guard off the shores of India and South East Asia in general. Conrad, like these cartographers, employed imagination to conveniently mask his terror of the Other.

Unsurprisingly, imagination plays a pivotal role in *The Shadow Lines*, as well. It in fact represents the key concept Tridib strives to pass on to the unnamed narrator: "the one thing he wanted to teach me, he used to say, was to use my imagination with precision."[6] Imagination in a postcolonial context becomes an instrument of knowledge and a precious tool that increases the likelihood of encountering, knowing and understanding alterity, effortlessly enabling individuals to accomplish journeys – either mental or real – to other places without losing their orientation, and preparing them to overcome difficulties when faced with thorny situations. It further enables the characters populating *The Shadow Lines* to view the Other, shaken by profound emotions as in Conrad's novella, with the remarkable difference that while in *The Shadow-Line* this intense feeling materializes as fear, in Ghosh it is replaced with attraction. In a way, while Conrad's rhetoric seems to be based on "We are different, therefore we fight each other," Ghosh philosophically replicates with "We are different, therefore we attract each other." In Ghosh, therefore, imagination serves the purpose of helping people to create connections with the Other.

An analysis aimed at examining the tools and the techniques of possible approaches to otherness invariably leads us investigate the close relationships between Self and Other in the two parallel fictions. To start with, Conrad's *The Shadow-Line* is a story reported by an unnamed narrator who describes his adventures as a young seaman when he first had the chance to take command of a vessel. Although apparently the narrator and the protagonist are the same person, they are actually, strictly speaking, not the same self, as they are separated by that shadow line celebrated in the title which dramatically separates youth from maturity, self from persona, age of innocence from age of experience. In this sense – and it is far

[5] WAYNE C. BOOTH. *The Rhetoric of Fiction.* Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1961. pp. 3-22.
[6] AMITAV GHOSH. *The Shadow Lines*. New Delhi, Ravi Dayal Publishers, 1988, p.24.

from surprising in Conrad – *The Shadow-Line* is a story evidently playing with the self and its double. As may easily be imagined, the analogies with Ghosh's novel are copious in this regard. *The Shadow Lines*, in fact, is an appealing chronicle of a number of episodes recounted by an unnamed young narrator – curiously defined as "Ghosh's alter ego"[7] by one scholar – focussing his attention mainly on Tridib, the narrator's uncle and guide, among a vast assortment of episodes and characters. Although the richness of the novel makes it possible to summarise the main story in hundreds of different ways, it is however possible to stress that the plot insists on how the unnamed narrator strives to follow in his uncle's footsteps, in such a way that he seems to carry on with the unfinished task of his mentor as if he were a relay runner arriving at the finishing line of a race. Among a number of similar coincidences, the narrator takes up anthropology as Tridib had previously done and, most importantly, culminates his uncle's sentimental dream with May Price. In a similar but complementary way, therefore, *The Shadow Lines* is a story in which narrator and protagonist are not the same character but are the same self, making this novel another notable case of Doppelganger. We may even stretch the analogy further by highlighting how persona and self in both fictions end up occupying the same psychological territories of the inexpert boy/child as opposed to the mature identity in stories in which the latter ensures the success of the protagonist's adventures. It may be interesting to note at this juncture that neither the unnamed captain of the Vidar nor the young Bengali lad seem to be aware of where they are going at various times during their respective existences. In this sense, the construction of *The Shadow Lines* replicates and re-writes *The Shadow-Line*: a righteous and invisible guide impersonating an accepted set of moral codices carefully leads the inexperienced protagonist home through a crucial ordeal. Yet, what opposes the implied author of *The Shadow-Line* from Tridib – and, if it is necessary to stress this again, what opposes colonial from postcolonial agendas – is their politics of creating distance rather than attempting to bridge the self to the Other.

The close mirror-like relationship between implied author and unnamed narrator in *The Shadow-Line* and between Tridib and unnamed narrator in *The Shadow Lines* does not however exhaust the discourse on doubled identities; conversely, it simply provides a starting point for a closer analysis of the colonial(ist) and analogous post-colonial text. Both the narrations in fact create an astonishing net of nexuses between a number of different characters and these ought to be investigated in greater depth. As previously pointed out, Conrad's *The Shadow-Line* generates an interesting mirror-game situation as it surprisingly splits Conrad the narrator from Conrad the protagonist of the novella and it is precisely around the latter that a number of remarkable coincidences and parallel correspondences originate. Conrad the protagonist is from the very beginning of the plot associated with

[7] N. EAKAMBARAM. "The Theme of Violence in *The Shadow Lines*." *The Novels of Amitav Ghosh* (edited by R.K. Dhawan), New Delhi, Prestige Books, 1999, p. 103.

Conrad's real son Borys ("and all the others"[8]) to whom this story is dedicated, possibly because the two were about the same age at the time the novelist decided to write it. However, the parallel situation between them may seem disproportionate when we think about it carefully, if we consider that the narration brackets together a seaman's first captaincy and a soldier's departure for war. We must infer that the adventure of the former was really shocking if it is likened to a military conflict, in this case World War I. Nonetheless, the narrator's mastery is such that we as readers do not find any imbalance in this correlation nor have I found similar remarks in the comments I have read on *The Shadow-Line*. As I shall try to demonstrate below, what associates the protagonist with the person to whom this novella is dedicated is not the drama of a particular event but a test of virility. Another similar association may be the one between Captain Giles and the implied author, whose shared values and precious experience help the inexpert commander sail in his sea of troubles. The unnamed protagonist may also be likened to Ramson, as their shared heroism and self-control in a maddening context which drives all those around them to illness or loss of sanity single them out both in the microworld of the Vidar and the wider context of the setting of the novella. Creating invisible lines linking high-ranking officers to cooks on board a vessel in a colonial story should come as no surprise, however, because affinities and associations between (British) members of different social strata was much more common in adventure fiction than in literature whose setting was in the homeland because, as Boehmer perceptively explains, "the identification between men, inside the pages of colonialist fiction and out of it, helped to sublimate the uncertainties of a confrontation with colonized people."[9] Edward Said, who I am happy to stress here is one of the very few scholars to have devoted great attention to the analysis of this underestimated work by Conrad (in his book *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*, *The Shadow-Line* is the only work by Conrad to which an entire chapter is dedicated), instead emphasizes how the case of another double may relate Captain Giles to Hamilton as the respectful opposed to "the eternal hanger-on in the dark tomb of a sailor's home."[10]

Yet, the relationship in *The Shadow-Line* which probably best demonstrates Conrad's typical use of the technique of creating double identities in a colonial context, and which originates the plot of this story, is that casting a shadow line between the conflicting selves of the unnamed narrator and Captain Snaddon. The fictional pretext which Conrad develops in a spectacular way to create what may be seen either as an adventurous, and allegedly autobiographic anecdote or a mythical account in the context of European expansion or even a fairy-tale concerned with a hero's traditional rite of initiation, is the spine-chilling opposition between a young commander of a vessel and its former first officer, an aged seaman who became

[8] JOSEPH CONRAD. *The Shadow Line*. London, Penguin, 1917 [1986], p. 34.
[9] ELLEKE BOEHMER. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature – Migrant Metaphors*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 77-78.
[10] EDWARD W. SAID. *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*. Harvard, Harvard University Press, 1966, p. 173.

completely demented before dying at sea, and at the time of the story exists only in the form of an "evil spell." [Conrad, 1986: 106] It is amusing to read, if I may be allowed a brief aside at this juncture, that Conrad started the famous '*Author's Note*' introducing his novella in all editions published since 1920 stating that it "was not intended to touch on the supernatural." [Conrad, 1986: 35] D.H. Lawrence's famous maxim "Never trust the author, trust the tale," will never find a more suitable example than this. However, Captain Snadden, whose real and historical figure was deeply researched by Norman Sherry who came to the conclusion that he "was not so irrational as the master of the story,"[11] belongs to that category of (Western) characters in Conrad's fiction who act as foils to the protagonists in their respective tales and appear to have lost their minds and have totally surrendered to amorality, if not to a demonic order. Snadden's famous Conradian prototype is obviously Mr. Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, whose case is discussed in Andrea White's illuminating study. White refers to this general case as the "white-degenerate colonizer,"[12] a character possessing – according to prevailing English attitudes during the Colonial Age – a white body and a savage soul and therefore appeared as the opposite of the Noble Savage, who had a black body but a white (i.e. civilized) mind. Seen from this perspective, both Kurtz's and Snadden's deranged actions appear as evident acts of betrayal of their inherited set of Western bourgeois codes, to the extent that the former is likely to be associated with the black heart of Africa, the latter with the exotic Orient. To use a phrase which became famous in *Lord Jim*, they are no longer "one of us," at least from the viewpoint of their narrators. Boehmer again makes an acute analysis of the context in which such betrayals occurred: "In general, where women figured at all in the world beyond the seas it was as seductive distraction or baleful presence, unmanning and polluting for those who fell under their spell." [Boehmer, 1995: 76] This is exactly the case with Snadden, who, we feel, was "[d]eranged by the outcome of a love affair on shore."[13] The entire plot of *The Shadow-Line* revolves around this unreasonable antagonism between a watchful seaman and a ghost, who is apparently too jealous to leave his ship in the hands of another (younger) man. Jealous, let me insist, not of his woman but of his ship.

Jealousy between the unnamed narrator and his rival in love also creates doubles in *The Shadow Lines*, particularly in a brief but significant scene when the young Bengali narrator imagines he sees Nick Price next to him – although he has not yet met him – as he watches his image reflected in the mirror. Commenting on this passage, John Thieme has sharply observed that "it bears a marked relationship to forms of colonial discourse that define non-European subjectivity as the inferior partner in a two-way power relationship."[14] However, while the love rivalry between the

[11] NORMAN SHERRY. *Conrad's Eastern World*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1971, p. 221.
[12] ANDREA WHITE. *The Adventure Tradition. Constructing and Deconstructing the Imperial Subject*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 14.
[13] DAVID LUCKING. *Conrad's Mysteries. Variations on an Archetypal Theme*. Lecce, Micella, 1986, p. 86.
[14] JOHN THIEME. "Amitav Ghosh." *The Companion to Indian English Fiction* (edited by Pier Paolo Piciucco), New Delhi, Atlantic Books, 2004, pp. 257-258.

unnamed narrator and Snadden occupies quite a central place in the economy of *The Shadow-Line*, the antagonism between the unnamed narrator and Nick Price is relegated to a marginal position in Ghosh's novel, because the narrator shifts his interests to May Price once Ila marries the blond Englishman. Ila also becomes one of the narrator's possible projections in the course of the plot because, like Tridib and his nephew, she is attracted by an English person with whom she falls in love. Similar inclinations (with different epilogues) seem to invest many of the younger generation in the Bose family, after they have crossed paths with the Price-Tresawsens. Such close associations between characters in *The Shadow Lines* are more than simply numerous and accurately illustrate how Ghosh's imagination works with close correspondences to create characters and events. Urbashi Barat has made a list of doubles in this novel and the result is remarkable indeed: "the narrator-Tridib, Tridib-Robi, the narrator-Ila, Tha'mma-Mayadebi, Tha'mma-Ila, the narrator-Nick, Tha'mma-Mrs. Price, and so on."[15]

Where *The Shadow Lines* fully reveals its oppositional perspective in relation to its English 'parent' is in its distinctive way of deconstructing the politics opposing centre to margins which, in my opinion, characterize the whole of Conrad's thought and literary production, especially those works whose stories are set in the colonies. Of course, Conrad's ideological affiliation in this regard is not always straightforward. Many of his stories are told by a somewhat enigmatic narrator such as Marlow, and end up dividing scholars on possible interpretations. *The Shadow-Line* in this sense may seem to be an exception to the rule, were it not that the narrator's voice here very closely echoes Marlow's in orientation, self-esteem and narratorial approach. Not only does Marlow's stance create divergent opinions in critics but the matter is further complicated by the way each scholar tends to view Marlow in relation to his creator: while for some Marlow is Conrad's mouthpiece, for others Conrad positions himself at varying degrees of distance from his narrator. Is Marlow therefore a fictional invention or is he simply one of Conrad's masks? This remains a moot point for postcolonial and literary critics in general. Benita Parry proposes a balanced solution when she argues that Conrad "is the artist of ambivalence and the divided mind."[16] While I have carried on my discourse so far and discussed Conrad's fiction as 'colonial' or 'colonialist' in scope I am well aware that a considerable number of scholars have an opposite viewpoint. John Thieme, an authoritative voice in this field of studies, in his discussion of *Heart of Darkness*, a work which discusses Empire from a viewpoint very similar to that of *The Shadow-Line*, wrote that "the novella is *about* racism, but it does more to expose the racist thinking that permeated the late nineteenth-century psyche, whether exemplified by Kurtz or Marlow, than to perpetuate it." [Thieme, 2001: 31]

[15] URBASHI BARAT. "Time in *The Shadow Lines*". *The Fiction of Amitav Ghosh* (edited by Indira Bhatt and Indira Nityanandam), New Delhi, Creative Books, 2001, p. 42.
[16] BENITA PARRY. *Conrad and Imperialism*, London, Macmillan, 1983, p. 3.

Chapter III

While *The Shadow-Line* clearly positions England at the centre of the Empire and South East Asia at the margins, Ghosh re-defines these primary orientation points choosing 'home' as the zenith for his characters. The recurrent emphasis on addresses, the imaginary houses the children elect to play in, the story of the divided house in Dhaka, Tha'mma's confused use of the verbs 'to go' and 'to come' because she has lost all notion of where home is, the importance of visits home – either after a transcontinental journey or, as is Tridib's case in the opening pages, after a brief stroll – all these elements together contribute to stressing how houses play a central role in (re-)orienting characters and, consequently, shaping their identity. Houses change, however, and Ghosh's characters move from one to another establishing new correspondences between the locale and their inner selves. It is in this way that houses and removals become a favourite trope for shifting identities in a hybridizing, postmodern, diasporic context. Opposed to the traditional static way of defining identities, Ghosh offers an alternative option more in keeping with the realistic politics of the subaltern studies and the diasporic deconstruction of the antinomic categories of centre and periphery. What *The Shadow Lines* strives (and manages) to do is therefore to demonstrate that identities are not univocal, single, static, constant. They have changeable effects. Identities are multiple, overlapping, subject to continuous modification, the changes caused by historical events, creating new cultural horizons. Within these new places, identities create meaning and provide a new orientation. The use of *The Bartolomew Atlas*, originally a gift for eight-year-old Tridib, later inherited by his nephew, by providing easy and secure orientation in a disorienting metropolis such as London, becomes a sort of fairy-tale magic tool and should be considered in this specific perspective.

The practice of decentering the margins also has the inevitable effect of dismantling older notions of alterity, which represent the bulwark of Conrad's fiction and philosophy. This is particularly evident as we compare the narratorial approaches in Conrad and in Ghosh: the former adopts monologue to describe reality, making the experienced western sea-officer – either Marlow or the unnamed narrator in *The Shadow Lines* – the only channel authorised 'to deal with facts,' while the latter counters this ideology using a dialogical approach allowing both English and Indians, men and women, experts and novices, the traditional and the innovative, the young and elderly all to express their thoughts. I fully agree with Boehmer when she argues that "the colonizer's aim was to impose a monopoly on discourse" [Boehmer, 1995: 53] and for this reason I think that Conrad's colonial fiction has a colonizer's aim. It everywhere silences the Other and provides a dominant representation of events, although at times the author's sense of guilt, pessimism and acumen in criticizing wrongs may seem to direct his critique towards his own system.

So far, however, I have dealt with two of the three tales that overlap in the plot of *The Shadow-Line*: a young man's first experience as a ship captain in the Orient and the story of his duel with his ship's ghostly former commander, metaphor and justification for imperialist expansion. There is also a more private discourse that

cautiously emerges from the pages of this story, curiously relating the autobiographical events which occurred at the beginning of the career of the young seaman Korzeniowski, told by the novelist Conrad at the end of his literary career. Considering that Conrad has often been said to be a compulsive writer, it is odd that he took such a long time and resisted the temptation to write down the only tale which he claimed was autobiographical. The subtitle chosen for this novella, *A Confession*, moreover opens new areas of debate because the two parallel stories do not investigate any particular misdeed implying the emergence of a sense of guilt.

In a wider perspective, the story of colonial domination is actually the story of a significant desire of possession which elegantly disguises a(nother significant) sexual desire. The construction of what Boehmer so aptly calls "the empire of the imagination" [Boehmer, 1995: 44] sinks its roots deep into an area of the mind which was long repressed by sexual reticence resulting from a stifling combination of a dogmatic religious credo and the rigorous observation of restrictive social conventions. One reason imperialism emerged was that it served as a means to release these inhibited sexual drives and instincts. It was the Orient, as an area of the colonizer's mind carefully created to answer to the specific need to fantasize about the exotic, more than any other imperial conquest, that introduced the readers of colonial fictions to a sexualised domain of the psyche. Edward Said's famous theory of Orientalism defines the Orient as feminine, prone, sensual and irrational, among a number of other stereotypes. The Orient, as also *The Shadow-Line* testifies, was a place where "men as individuals defined their masculinity." [Boehmer, 1995: 75] The colonial adventure was also readily deconstructed by British (male) readers as a metaphor for a sexual encounter, and Britons were eager to read about exotic lands "in such explicitly male terms as 'the virgin track,' or 'the unpenetrated forest.'" [White, 1993: 63] If on a surface level English explorers in the Orient defined or proved their masculinity through adventurous deeds in such a way that the colonial propaganda largely benefited from and was grateful for this free contribution to the cause, on a deeper level colonial fiction liberated British readers (most of whom were at home) from the constrictions of social regulations because its ideological involvement and cunning choice to hide sexually stimulating narrations behind a façade of rightful self-assessing nationalist adventures skilfully enabled it to dodge the restrictions of a strict prudish censorship. It is evident to every reader that the topics – both on a superficial and on a deeper level – dealt with in colonial fiction differed remarkably from those found in the parallel fiction of English authors writing stories occurring in the British isles.

The third story which the 'experienced' narrator in *The Shadow-Line* tells the reader is evidently a sex story, well camouflaged within the contours of an adventure at sea, which therefore itself becomes a metaphor of that crucial rite of passage. In this precise context, the love triangle constituted by the young narrator, captain Snadden and the feminized ship acquires a particular meaning. The old commander's unrestrained folly and jealousy therefore appear as a clear fictional elaboration of a

real situation which Sherry has demonstrated was quite different from the one narrated in the novella. Yet, one of the main reasons *The Shadow-Line* has received some attention is the possibility of reading the text as the confession of a homosexual encounter between the unnamed narrator and his Doppelganger Ramson. My opinion is that the Orient in *The Shadow-Line* provides the suitable mindscape in which a tortured young man can be placed in order to satisfy a clandestine sexual drive and which hence originates that pervading sense of shame and of guilt obfuscating his mind and characterizing his traumatic tale. His sense of shame may be more easily comprehended if we consider how the knowledgeable narrator uses the love affair creating an antagonistic situation with the former captain as a sort of fig leaf behind which he can disguise his real focus of attraction. After all the need to create a heterosexual identity in order to be socially accepted (the more so if we think about how rigid post-Victorian English society was in these matters) is common practice among homosexuals who experience their instinctual sexuality as troubling and the origin of a number of complexes. Needless to say, the long state of impasse perceived on board as a torture is a viable representation of the ordeal the young man went through when he was obliged to accept a part of his nature which must have been, one gathers, very upsetting and disturbing. Only by interpreting the novella from this perspective can we properly think of placing some of its symbolic elements in the right perspective. "The young man's dim and unlocated intuition of guilt" [Lucking, 1986: 87], generally tentatively explained as resulting from his failure to check if all necessary medicines were on board before departure, and somewhat inherited from the ship's previous commander, is a case in point. Both the sense of guilt and shame originating from a homosexual experience would in my opinion also clarify why Conrad declared that his first command was in March-April 1887, while it actually was in January-February 1888, causing Sherry to innocently explain this as "a slip of memory on Conrad's part." [Sherry, 1971: 211] An officer proud of his sailing career would hardly have mistaken the date of his first command. Finally, the likelihood that this interpretation is accurate is testified to by Conrad's choice of subtitle and title of this novella. I think it is worthwhile to remember here that nowhere else can we find such an explicit subtitle as *A Confession* in Conrad's vast literary output and this acquires full meaning in the light of the open declaration of having committed a sin, a sin that does not surface (clearly) in the story of the young officer simply commanding a vessel for the first time. As for the title, we know instead, because Conrad himself wrote about this in the *Author's Note*, that he had also considered calling the story *First Command* [Conrad, 1986:40] but then opted for *The Shadow-Line*, the former being the appropriate title of an adventurous tale, the latter an image describing indistinct, gloomy psychological processes. Between an adventure in an exotic land and a confession of a guilt-ridden juvenile abandon to the senses, Conrad chose the latter as his subject.

Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* is no less intricate than Conrad's novella, because he too plays with sexual desire arising in an encounter with alterity, but he tackles the matter in a more linear way. What the novel plainly argues as the approach to the Other is brought into focus is that this event always fires (sexual) desire in both the parties, although the Indian characters generally seem to be more intrigued than the Britons, perhaps because the writer is more confident describing them as more aroused than their (former) colonizers. If we try to read the meeting with the Other in this novel as a metaphor for clandestine sexual desire, since both in Ghosh and in Conrad, albeit for different reasons, this encounter is viewed as the breaking of a taboo, we can see *The Shadow Lines* as a formation novel following the events of a child who first has a crush on his beautiful cousin and then, once rejected, finds his counterpart in a warm-hearted English woman. His meeting with the (female) other involves him in direct confrontation with a taboo: in the first case the girl belongs to his own family; in the second he is evidently embarrassed, perhaps because of the distance keeping them apart, perhaps by the difference in their age, perhaps by both. It is however interesting to note that although Ila is part of his family and therefore Indian, he views her as wealthy and westernized so that "it is her striking foreignness, her western ways and easy informality that attract him."[17] The narrator therefore always falls in love with a girl who he decides is foreign, alien to him, regardless of her real origin. The most interesting part of his maturation is yet to come, however. This occurs when he later meets and falls in love with May Price. The shadow lines distancing him from her are anyway so thick that, although attracted by the woman, he needs alcohol in order to overcome his uneasiness and approach her. He gets a bit tipsy with the result that he clumsily assaults her in an ironic scene, which the morning after has been forgotten (and forgiven) by his victim, leaving him impressed. The gap that the protagonist needs to fill between himself and May can best be understood if we compare the unnamed narrator as a sweet lover in the last scene to the wild alcoholic seducer in the episode just mentioned. The incident also shows that the mental distance between them is enormous. My theory is that Tridib, almost an immaculate, flawless hero, is merely a fictional creation of the narrator's mind helping the protagonist in his ordeal and allowing him to bridge the differences between himself and May in the final scene of the novel. Seen in this way, Tridib's stories, his life and death would therefore be just an idealized fantasy the narrator employs to reduce the distance between himself and his beloved. Tridib, in conclusion, is the fictional artifice enabling the unnamed narrator to reach May, his other self, whereas in *The Shadow-Line* Snadden is the fictional artifice enabling the unnamed narrator to reach Ransome, his other self, without undue complication.

[17] MURARI PRASAD. "A Quest for 'Indivisible Sanity.'" *The Novels of Amitav Ghosh* (edited by R.K. Dhawan), New Delhi, Prestige Books, 1999, p 92.

A comparative analysis of *The Shadow-Line* and *The Shadow Lines* therefore illustrates that colonial(ist) and post-colonial fictions mostly face each other as self and mirror image, joined and divided at the same time by a strange, ambivalent love-hate relationship typical of the Oedipal complex. If it seems fair to assert that both create representations of alterity, possibly because this is an innate psychological process common to people at all longitudes and latitudes, it is instead in their way of establishing/removing hierarchical orders that their politics differ radically.

Chapter IV

Tension and Conflict in Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth*

A.N. Dwivedi

Ever since the publication of *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999)[1], which fetched the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2000, Jhumpa Lahiri has shot into fame and scaled a new height of success. After *Interpreter of Maladies*, which powerfully depicts the lives of Indians settled in America shuttling "between the strict traditions they've inherited and the baffling New World they must encounter every day."[2] *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008)[3] is Jhumpa Lahiri's second book of short stories, appearing as it does after her novel, *The Namesake* (2003)[4]. It is dedicated to Octavio and Noor, and its title is derived from Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Custom House". The phrase 'unaccustomed earth' is applied to strange places, to unknown locations, which create tension and conflict in the book to an extent. This volume consists of two parts -- Part one having five stories and Part Two only three interconnected ones.

The volume opens with the story "Unaccustomed Earth" (which gives title to it). The story primarily deals with the lonely condition of Ruma's father (name is not mentioned anywhere) after his wife's death. He is now retired from a pharmaceutical company and has begun travelling in Europe frequently, -- in France, Holland, Italy etc. The father always maintains a distance from Ruma, who is now 38, having an earning husband, Adam, and a son called Akash of barely three years. She and Adam have purchased a house on the eastside of Seattle (U.S.A.). Ruma's father writes a postcard to her, expressing his desire to see her new-bought house, and she invites him gladly – "You're always welcome here, Baba" (p.4). There is a touch of formality between them, but this kind of formality was totally absent in her relations with her mother. Her mother had died on the operating table, of heart failure (p.5), all of a sudden, leaving behind a disconsolate husband and two sad children – Ruma (daughter) and Romi (son), who is living far-away from his parents). Ruma is expecting another child when her father arrives in Seattle. He is heartily received by Ruma. He develops intimacy with Akash while working in the garden and planting new flowers and vegetables there. Then, the day of parting comes, as he does not want "to be a burden" (p.52) on his daughter and her family. He rather wants to protect Ruma from her children becoming "strangers" to her trying to avoid her (as it was in his own case, p. 54). Next morning, he leaves Ruma's house in a car, while Akash is still asleep. When he is gone, Akash gets up and goes out to the garden, followed by his mother, who sees pens, pencils, a straw, a stick, some papers od envelopes, and cards in magazines. Suddenly her eyes fall on a postcard having no postmark. This postcard is written in Bengali and addressed in English to someone on Long Island, to one Mrs. Meenakshi Bagchi. But it could not be sent. Ruma at once recognises the handwriting of her father, and comes to realise that her father, after her mother's death, has fallen in love with Mrs. Bagchi. She affixes the stamp on the postcard and hands it over to the mailman.

Chapter IV

The next story, "Hell-Heaven", narrates the love-affairs between a housewife and a younger family friend called Pranab Chakraborty (or Pranab Kaku). The narrator is Usha, the young daughter of the 29 year-old housewife. Her father is 37, and Pranab Kaku is 25. The relationship between Kaku and Usha's mother is broken when Deborah, an American girl, comes into the picture. Later Kaku and Deborah get married and are blessed with twins (both being girls). Usha's mother is highly critical of Deborah for snatching Kaku away from her : "In a few weeks, the fun will be over and she'll leave him" (p. 68). She thinks that Deborah is neither beautiful nor will make "an excellent mother" (p. 70). Despite opposition from his parents (in India), Kaku marries Deborah in a church and floats a party. Visits from Kaku almost stop and the blame is put squarely on Deborah : "She was the enemy, he was her prey, and their example was invoked as a warning, and as vindication, that mixed marriages were a doomed enterprise" (p. 75). And precisely, this happens with Deborah and Kaku. After twenty-three years of marriage, they get divorced. Deborah is in her forties by then, and Kaku falls in love with a married Bengali woman. Deborah rings up Usha's mother to inform about all this. As Usha's mother has, however, forgotten all about her past – Kaku's desertion of herself after his marriage, and her deep shock over it leading to her attempts at suicide (as she confesses later to her daughter-narrator) and is now happy with her husband and does not blame Deborah for snatching away Kaku from her.

The third story, "A Choice of Accommodations," is all about the love of a married couple – Amit and Megan – having two daughters named Maya and Monika. The only canker in their harmonious relationship is Pam, the headmaster's daughter, whose wedding is going to take place shortly. In fact, Amit as a boy had attended the headmaster's school, and had become intimate with his entire family, including Pam. He had even loved Pam. To attend Pam's marriage, he and his wife leave their children with Megan's parents and hire a hotel room in Langland at $ 250 per day. But this hotel room is not to their liking. They want to shift to the school dorm to be more comfortable. They attend the wedding party and pass the night at the headmaster's, and return to the hotel one by one, leaving behind the car in their drunkenness. Next day, they go to the school building to bring back their car. Clouds suddenly gather in the sky and the rains are imminent. They take shelter in Standish Hall, the dorm now fully deserted, and make love to each other to their exhaustion : "He came inside her and sat up, knowing they could not linger" (p. 126). Taken as a whole, this story lacks narration and borders on the physical fulfilment of a married couple.

The succeeding story, "Only Goodness", focuses on a sister, named Sudha, trying to save her younger brother, Rahul, from alcoholism, but all her efforts in this direction end in a fiasco. Initially, she shares pegs of wine with him, but when he goes to the extremes, at the cost of his study and career, she becomes alarmed, like her parents. By all means, she is a careerist who comes to occupy the post of a project manager for an organization in London that promotes "micro loans in poor countries" (p. 151). Her London-based husband, Roger Featherstone, a Ph.D. in art history and an editor of an art magazine, is a matter-of-fact man, who gets irritated with Rahul when the latter neglects his small son Neel during his absence. Sudha takes it seriously, as Neel might have been drowned in the bath-tub full of water up to his chest. She clearly tells her brother to leave her house and go back to America, as his carelessness in a drunken state "could have killed him" (her son, p. 172). The story is inheresting in stuff, but what intrigues me is its title which applies to the small boy

Neel depending fully on his mother for his feeding and care – "… he was young enough so that Sudha was still only goodness to him, nothing else" (p. 173). The entire story deals with Rahul and his wayward behaviour under his drunkenness, and suddenly it takes a turn towards the small boy.

The next story, "Nobody's Business", brings to the fore a love tangle between Sang (shortened for Sangeeta) and Farouk, who is equally, or even more, involved with another woman called Deirdre Frain. Sang is a pretty and smart Bengali girl of thirty, and is now working part time at a bookstore on the square. She is a much sought after girl for Bengali bachelors, but she refuses all of them, one by one, for the love of Farouk, an Egyptian of Cairo now living in America. Sang's housemates, Paul and Heather (who are preparing for their respective examinations), do not ask Sang about her phone-calls or suitors. Sang's relations with Farouk have been very close but full of tension. Despite their frequents calls and visits, they fall out at times. She even accuses him of not meeting her friends, of not inviting her to his cousin's house for Thanksgiving, of not spending the night together, and of not driving her home. Then follows the heated exchange between them:

> "I pay for the cabs," Farouk said quietly. "What
>
> difference does it make?"
>
> "I hate it, Farouk. It's abnormal."
>
> "You know I don't sleep when you're there."
>
> "How are we ever going to get married?" She
>
> demanded. "Are we supposed to live in separate
>
> houses forever?"
>
> "Sang, please," Farouk said. "Try to be calm. Your
>
> roommates will hear."
>
> "Will you stop about my roommates," Sang shouted.
>
> "You're hysterical," Farouk said.
>
> She began to cry.
>
> "I've warned you, Sang," Farouk said. He sounded
>
> desperate. "I will not spend my life with a woman,
>
> who makes scenes."
>
> "Fuck you." (p. 189).

This tense, hurried conversation reveals a lot about their behaviour and relationship. "Coming events cast their shadows beforehand" – this famous saying is exactly

applicable to these two lovers. Their desperate love leads to accusations and heated exchanges of words, and eventually to separation. In the game of love, Sang loses, while Deirdre succeeds. Sang goes away to London to live with her elder sister (who is married, having a baby son now).

The second part of the book contains a cluster of there stories titled "Once in a Lifetime," "Year's End" and "Going Ashore." All these stories are about Hema and Kaushik, both being small children aged six and nine years respectively. Of these stories, the first one recounts the childhood of Hema and Kaushik. Before coming to Massachusetts, America, their parents had lived in Cambridge, where "they were both equally alone" (p. 225). As a child, Hema the narrator was compelled to wear the clothes used by Kaushik, and mostly they wore winter items like sweaters and coat and also rubber boots. In the meantime, Kaushik's parents leave America to settle down in Calcutta, but since his father. Dr. Choudhuri, is offered a decent job in Bombay the family shifts to Bombay. For seven long years they live there, but the circumstances, especially the breast cancer of Mrs. Choudhuri (whom Hema's mother always calls Parul Di), compel them to return to Massachusetis, U.S.A. Dr. Choudhuri informs Hema's father about it, and also requests him to allow his family to stay with him until he gets a suitable accommodation. Dr. Choudhuri and his family fly to America in first class, and Mrs. Chaudhuri explains this as her "fortieth birthday gift.... Once in a lifetime" (p. 233). Thus, the two families come closer, and Hema, now thirteen, develops a fancy – secret attraction for the reserved boy, Kaushik (p. 297). Later, Dr. Choudhuri and his family search out a house on the North Shore and shift there.

"Year's End" opens on an ominous note, reporting about the death of Kaushik's mother and her father marrying another woman called Chitra, aged 35 and having two daughters from her previous husband (who is now dead). Chitra belongs to Calcutta where she was a school teacher. She is twenty years younger than Kaushik's father. The two daughters are named Rupa and Piu. When they come to America, Kaushik visits them during the Christmas holidays. The two girls start liking him, while his father and Chitra enjoy themselves. Apparently, Kaushik does not like his step-mother, and says to her daughters as follows: "Well, you've seen it for yourselves, how beautiful my mother was. How much prettier and more sophisticated than yours. Your mother is nothing in comparison. Just a servant to wash my father's clothes and cook his meals" (pp. 286-87). One night when Chitra and his father are out to attend a party, Kaushik leaves the two girls in sleep and slips away.

"Going Ashore" reverts to the life-story of Hema and Kaushik in Italy, where Hema has come on a visiting lectureship at an institute of classical studies before proceeding to Calcutta for her marriage with a professor called Navin. Kaushik also comes there as a photojournalist on his way to Hong Kong. Though she is engaged to Navin, Hema and Kaushik make intense love to each other. Kaushik even tries to persuade her not to marry Navin. Once he says to her, "Then why are you marrying him?" (p. 313), and again, "Don't marry him, Hema" (p. 321). She is struck by his selfishness; moreover, unlike Navin, he is not offering to come to her. Instead, he wants her to accompany him to Hong Kong. But destiny takes her to her parents now living in Calcutta, where her marriage with Navin eventually takes place. Kaushik's death in a massive surge of water that swept South India, Sri Lanka and Thailand is reported at the close of the novel (p.333).

Finally, Lahiri has succeeded admirably in telling her tales in *Unaccustomed Earth*, but in some of them she has unduly diluted the reader's attention (as in "A Choice of Accommodations"). Here her art of narration, characterization, and suspense-development has definitely scaled a new high, and we can claim that shorter fiction is her *forte.*

II

The themes that emerge from the stories are "The heart of family life and the immigrant experience." They mostly rotate around love and marriage, even divorce and death. In some stories the dark clouds gather in the horizon and the human relations once so sweet become embittered or broken. This happens in story after story, particularly as in "Hell-Heaven" and "Nobody's Business."In Lahiri's scheme of things, mothers are allowed to die, while fathers survive to remarry in their advanced age, as found in "Unaccustomed Earth" and "Year's End." This adds a tragic touch to the mentioned stories. At times, two intensely loving souls are separated by the cruel hands of Destiny, as in "Hell-Heaven", "Nobody's Business", and "Going Ashore." In many stories, the sense of nostalgia predominates, as in "Unaccustomed Earth" where Ruma always remembers her mother fondly, (pp. 4-5; 33; 46; etc.), and in "Year's End" where Kaushik is obsessed with the thought of his loved dead mother *vis-à-vis* Chitra, his step-mother (pp. 253; 254; 268; 286-87). Thematically speaking, there is a good deal of tension and conflict caused by loss of love, divorce and demise in this collection of short stories.

III

From the viewpoint of form, the stories are quite interesting. They are usually packed with emotion and thought. But some stories tend to be long, in fact too long to hold together the attention of the reader. Such stories are: "Unaccustomed Earth," "A Choice of Accommodations", "Only Goodness" and "Nobody's Business". Because of their excessive length, they transgress the desired qualities of a short story, -- brevity, conciseness, concentration. These are the qualities we find in the short stories of Maupassant, O. Henry, Chekov, and many others. But to some extent, they are missing in Jhumpa Lahiri's short stories. Some of her stories, like "Hell-Heaven", "Once in a Lifetime" and "Going Ashore," do sustain our interest in them, but others do not succeed in this task.

In my opinion, the story "A Choice of Accommodations" is the worst one in both content and form. It seems to be charotic and purposeless, and I wonder that such a seasoned writer as Lahiri should have written it. A writer must keep in mind that mere "eat, drink and be merry" is not the sole end of life, that a couple need not run away from their children, entrusting them to the supervision of others, just to make love and get involved in sex in a hotel or dormitory.

Otherwise, Lahiri shows her dexterity in narrating most of her stories in a gripping style. At places her dialogues become very witty and trenchant. I have quoted above one such dialogue from "Nobody's Business" at some length. Very often the writer resorts to third –person narration; all the stories in the first Part are written so. But in the second Part, the writer takes to the first person narration. Lahiri begins

"Once in a Lifetime" as follows : "I had seen you before, too many times to count, but a farewell that my family threw for yours, at our house in Inman Square, is when I begin to recall your presence in my life" (p. 223). In the succeeding story, "Year's End", the 'you', 'yours' and 'your' of the previous story change into 'I' and 'my' --- "I did not attend my father's wedding" (p. 252). And in the last story, "Going Ashore", the writer reverts to her familiar mode of narration – the third-person narration: "Again she'd lied about what had brought her to Rome" (p. 294). At the close of this story as well as of the collection, the writer once again experiments with the first person narration. Here she writes thus : "All day I was oblivious. I was out with my mother and two aunts, being fitted for blouses, selecting jewels" (p. 331).

We can safely say that Jhumpa Lahiri has a penchant for story-telling. Barring two or three stories, she manages to tell her tale in an impressive way. Her art of narration and subtle use of dialogues put her among the front-runners of Indian English short story writers. She has to be cautions, no doubt, about the length of her short stories, lest they dilute the reader's attention. But she is superb in narrating her stories in a powerful language, in creating memorable characters and situations, and in experimenting with flashback technique (as in "Year's End"). She shows her remarkable skill in using different modes of narration, especially third-person and first-person.

IV

To conclude, Jhumpa Lahiri is a consummate short story writer of expatriate or diasporic sensibility. This sort of sensibility incorporates multiple worlds, multiple 'spaces' (to use a postcolonial term). Lahiri's stories are by-products of multinationalism (what we may term 'cultural diversity'), and this adds to much of tension and conflict found in them. In one of her insightful articles Meena Alexandeer, the noted Indian English poetess, aptly remarks that Lahiri's sensibility expresses itself in "a shifting frame of reference of multiple worlds."[5] It is largely concerned with, as Edward Said puts it, "not only … . A basic geographical distinction but also a whole sense of 'interests'."[6] No doubt, Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth* encompasses 'multiple worlds' or 'multiple spaces' in its texture – India, England, America, and Italy – and demonstrates 'a whole sense of 'interests' ' in its vision, and this results in tension and conflict born of geographical and cultural multiplicity.

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Chapter V

'Those Difficult Years'

Gillian Dooley

In *A Way in the World*, published in 1994, V.S. Naipaul writes at length about a writer called Foster Morris, someone who, past his prime in post-war London, had provided a critical opinion – not always constructive, and certainly not always kind – of some his early attempts at fiction. At first, he was grateful to Morris for advising him to abandon a novel which was not working, and 'to think more about writing' (87), and regarded him as 'this unlikely figure from the past who had set me free' (88). Later, however, more secure in his own work, he began to find it necessary to ignore Morris's critiques, not to 'allow any further word to fix itself on my consciousness' (96).

That Morris is a fictional character is not obvious, and more than one reader has no doubt scoured reference books in vain for information about him and his book *A Shadowed Livery* – a book about pre-war Trinidad, unusual in the serious way in which it treated local people 'as though they were English people – as though they had that kind of social depth and solidity and rootedness' (79). Whether Morris has a real-life equivalent or not, the fictional character plays a crucial role in Naipaul's narrative of his career. The recent publication of Naipaul's family correspondence dating from his first years in England throws a little more light on his experiences of this time – but only a little. 'Last year' he writes to his sister Kamla in early 1956, 'I wrote not one, but three books. The first I sent to a critic who criticised it so severely that I gave it up altogether and didn't even send it out to a publisher. I think it was the best thing. Because after that I decided to change my style of writing completely' (*Letters* 321) – and the result was *Miguel Street*, his first publishable book. The critic is unnamed in the letters, but it shows at least that there was a figure who played the role he assigned, nearly forty years later, to the fictional Morris.

This letter comes very near the end of the correspondence included in this book, and is 'the letter I have been longing to write home ever since I left Trinidad' (321) – the one announcing that his novel has been accepted for publication. It forms a natural climax to the narrative which has unfolded in the letters, of years of striving, of small triumphs and larger disappointments, with this aim always in view. The young man, not yet eighteen, leaves Trinidad for Oxford in August 1950, fearful but excited, and in the first letters home one can already see the particular combination of pride, self-consciousness, insecurity, and what one may have to call conceitedness: 'At first meetings I usually do impress people, but I soon become my normal clowning self, and consequently go down in their esteem. But, I suppose, that is my character. Let it be' (26). The high-minded disdain of that last phrase is amusing in a boy of eighteen, but it is an important element in the man and writer he has become the capacity to regard with a cool eye both himself and his surroundings, to notice, accept and describe his relations with those surroundings. Anyone who has read Naipaul's work in the past sixteen years or so, since the publication of *Finding the Centre*, is familiar with the story he has constructed of his career. Apart from the three

travel books of this period, on the southern United States, India and the Islamic countries, in which he makes a point of allowing the people he met to talk, 'keeping himself more in the background' (Robinson 110), he has in the later work become his own subject matter and made this explicit. Most recently, he has published *Reading and Writing*, a slim volume containing two essays which appeared in *New York Review of Books* last year. These essays take the narrative begun in *Finding the Centre* beyond the discovery that his natural subject matter for fiction was his Trinidad past, and relate his need to travel and explore the world and to understand his own place in it: 'Fiction, the exploration of one's immediate circumstances, had taken me a lot of the way. Travel had taken me further' (*Reading and Writing* 31).

He has had to make a pattern of his personal history so that it may be narrated. Briefly stated, the story of his pre-publication years goes thus: he emerges from the half-made society of Trinidad, with an ambition passed on to him by his father, to be a writer. He works relentlessly at school, wins a scholarship, and leaves Trinidad in 1950 to study English literature at Oxford. Oxford, he finds, is a lonely place where he feels intellectually superior and socially uncertain, where he makes no progress with becoming a writer, and suffers a nervous collapse. After Oxford, he spends many lonely blank months in London, until abruptly it occurs to him to write about people he knew from Port of Spain, in a simple concrete way, and finally his career as a published writer begins.

The lineaments of this narrative are on the whole supported by the primary evidence which the letters now provide. It is amusing, of course, to compare the contempt in his statement to Derek Walcott in 1965, that 'I am not a cricketer' (7), with his enthusiastic summary of a college cricket match in which he starred in Oxford in June 1952: 'In my last match I top-scored with 25 (3 fours) and bowled 3 wickets for 33 runs. So I have developed my cricket, if anything' (201). More interesting is to read his early attempts at poetry in his first Oxford term, as conveyed to his father in a letter:

> Beautiful words force themselves on you in this delightful climate. Listen to
> this. Read it aloud. I was trying to capture the sound of a racing train:
> *… noisy trains*
> *clangorously clattering towards nothing.*
> I don't care what anyone says, that is a really excellent line. Again, describing
> Oxford:
> *this elephant's cemetery where the cracked and the decrepit*
> *philosophies crack conglomerately in death.*
> Really fine, don't you think? You can see for yourself how vastly my poetry
> has improved. (26-27)

Six weeks later, and already his taste has improved: although the BBC has broadcast one of his poems and sent him a guinea, he admits to Kamla, 'I, as you probably know, am not poet. … They are very bad poems. I know it' (38). His prose, however, is already showing the signs of its future power: Christmas never meant much to me or to any one of our family. It was always so much of a glorious feeling of fun we felt existed somewhere, but we could never feel where it was. We were always on the

outside of a vague feeling of joy. The same feeling is here with me in London. Yet there is so much more romance here. It gets dark at about half past three and all the lights go on. The shops are bright, the streets are well lit and the streets are full of people. I walk through the streets, yet am so much alone, so much on the outside of this great festive feeling. (43) No clumsy experiments with alliteration or attempts at profundity, just simple statements, concrete observations building to a desolate conclusion. Later in the same letter, he admits that he has stopped writing: 'I suddenly feel dry. I express myself in abominable cliches, and expressive words just don't come' (44). Whether he carried his style of the letters into his fiction at this time, or tried a more sophisticated style as he implies, is a matter of conjecture. He completed a novel in September 1951, which, he reported 'a man from the Ashmolean Museum' who had befriended him found 'readable, funny and extremely well-written' (139). This was the novel he described in *A Way in the World* as not 'of any value (though there would have been things hidden in it); but the fact that I finished the book – two hundred or so pages of typescript – was important to me' (83). The demarcation between fact and fiction is once again blurred, when we see this novel referred to in the letters as *The Shadow'd Livery* (133) – the same title that, forty years later, he gave to Foster Morris' fictional book. He submitted it for publication in October, and its rejection in November fed into the depression and breakdown which overcame him early in 1952.

The Oxford years figure only sketchily in Naipaul's life story as it appears in *Finding the Centre*, *The Enigma of Arrival*, *A Way in the World* and, most recently, *Reading and Writing*. He remains reluctant to discuss the period in detail with interviewers, although he told James Atlas in 1987:

> It was a difficult time. … There was lack of money, uncertainty, great worry
> about my family. I was very isolated. My studies were of no importance.
> They didn't interest me. … I had a mental disturbance owing to the
> strangeness of where I was, to loneliness. One was so far from home. … So
> far from what one knew. It was an alien world, Oxford. … It was clear one
> would remain a stranger. (101)

His letters confirm this memory, although there were, inevitably, times when the letters were more cheerful than others. Some of the cheeriness is no doubt bravado, intended to raise morale at the Trinidad end, but some must be genuine, such as his delight at the success of a paper he gave to an Oxford literary society: 'Well, my dear people, my paper went down like a glass of the best champagne' (166), and the loneliness he remembers is contradicted by a letter in June 1952: 'I have formed a very wide circle of friends. And it is with difficulty that I can avoid, during term, seeing people I know. One man has made a point of coming up to my room about midnight to tell me of his success or failure in love' (202-3).

But the overriding impression is one of anxiety – caused, it seems clear, by the situation in which the family found itself. The ambition shared by father and son, that either or both of them should be a writer, could not be fulfilled if the son stayed in Trinidad; but the homesickness on his part, and the worry on his family's part, connected with his protracted years away from home, brought with it many problems. As well as Naipaul's own breakdown, the elder daughter Kamla, who was studying in Benares at the same time, implies that their father's illness and early death was brought on partly by worrying about his children studying overseas. This is a dilemma terrifyingly played out in one of Naipaul's stories, 'Tell Me Who to Kill,' from *In a Free*

State, in which the protagonist pays with his sanity for his younger brother's limited academic and social success in England.

Naipaul has said that he does not intend to read the letters in their newlypublished form: 'There are certain things that are too painful for people to even write about sometimes, and there are certain things that are too hard to read about again. One doesn't want to be reminded of those difficult years' (Suarez 1). He clearly consulted them, though, when he was writing the Foreword to his father's stories in 1976, as he quotes verbatim several passages where his father advises him about writing, or discusses his own stories. These stories, some of which had been published locally in 1943, were not published in England until 1976. He encouraged his father's hopes of publication – for example in a letter dated 3 February 1953, he wrote, 'you ought to know that I am perhaps more keen on your work than anyone else is,' and went on, 'if I try to hawk your book around, I wouldn't be doing you a favour. I would be trying to sell stuff that deserves to be published' (238). Nevertheless, he admitted in the 1976 foreword that at the time he 'did not think the stories publishable outside Trinidad, and I did nothing about them' (19). This must have been an added source of stress for him at the time, since both his father and Kamla were urging him to do all he could to hasten their publication. His quandary was, of course, solved, brutally, by his father's death in October 1953.

These stories do as much as the letters to show that Seepersad Naipaul, although the inspiration for the title character in *A House for Mr Biswas*, is not to be identified with him. Biswas tries to write, but, apart from his journalism and a couple of other short pieces, manages only versions of his fantasy of escape, which he never completes – which never goes beyond the hero's meeting with the young, barren heroine. Seepersad Naipaul, on the other hand, had his 'Adventures of Gurudeva:' a hundred pages long, not quite a novel, but certainly a literary achievement, as well as nine or ten other stories, which he worked on whenever he could spare time and energy from his increasingly tiresome journalistic duties. Reading these stories, one has the sense of a writer developing: reading the letters, one can see the frustration and ambition behind that development, but also the generosity with which he shared it all with his son. Vidia was probably not old enough to produce a worthwhile novel at eighteen, even with his precocity – and precocity can be a trap in itself, as says in *A Way in the World*: 'a precocious writer doesn't have much experience to work on; his talent isn't challenged. The quickness of such a writer lies in assuming the manner and sensibility of his elders' (101). Had Seepersad lived, he might have developed into a writer of real power, but he left the baton in his son's hand, and in a way this gave Vidia a head start. Seepersad's writing advice is exemplary:

> Your letters are charming in their spontaneity. … If you can bring the same quality of spontaneity in whatever you write, everything you write will have sparkle. I believe this free flow in one's written thought is due largely to absence of anxiety. It is due to one not setting oneself too big, sometimes impossible ideals. (29)

And later, 'write of things as they are happening now, be realistic, humour where this comes in pat, but don't make it deliberately so' (177). He also, flatteringly, trusts his son with the editing of his own stories for publication: 'I think "Uncle Dalloo" could be considerably improved by some careful cutting and pruning. You may try your hand at this, if you like, after the exams' (255). By the middle of 1952, the son is offering advice to the father:

> You manage a type of humour I cannot manage. Your view of life is

> surprisingly good-humoured. Well, don't write a novel then. Just let me have your short stories. And here: MAKE NO EFFORT TO THINK ABOUT DRAMATIC PLOTS. You can't manage them. Neither can I. Observe episodes. (193)

This kind of mutual morale-boosting occurs everywhere in the letters. The suggestion is made by both father and son at different times, that one should work for money to support the other, who would devote himself to writing – it almost seemed not to matter which was which. This feeling of close identification between father and son does not occur in *A House for Mr Biswas*, which instead provides an opportunity for a veiled exercise in self-chastisement:

> Anand's letters, at first rare, became more and more frequent. They were gloomy, self-pitying; then they were tinged with a hysteria which Mr Biswas immediately understood. He wrote Anand long humorous letters; he wrote about the garden; he gave religious advice; at great expense he sent by air mail a book called *Outwitting Our Nerves* by two American women psychologists.
>
> Anand's letters grew rare again. (586)

After his first heart attack, home again from hospital, he writes to Anand again:

> He wrote to Anand that he hadn't realized until then what a nice little house it was. But writing to Anand was like taking a blind man to see a view. … He continued to write cheerful letters to Anand. At long intervals the replies came, impersonal, brief, empty, constrained. (587)

On his relapse a few months later, his wife Shama writes to Anand, but he replies with 'a strange, maudlin, useless letter' (588). This is a highly exaggerated version of the correspondence we can now read, much more severe on the son than the reality of the situation warrants, since in fact there were reproofs for delays in writing on both sides, and there is clearly meaningful and affectionate communication between them.

But there is also a sense in which their close identification is recorded in the novel. Mohun Biswas suffers a mental breakdown, which takes the form of a terror of other people. Seepersad Naipaul also had a breakdown of some kind, which he mentions in the letters, in response to Vidia's admission of his own mental problems:

> About your troubles … I should know a good deal about it, for I was the victim of a neurosis myself many years ago. You will perhaps remember our sojourn in Chase Village; and before Chase Village my hard days at your Nanie's, then at Wilderness with Aiknith. (209)

Naipaul didn't know the precise nature of Seepersad's neurosis until he asked his mother, years after writing *A House for Mr Biswas*, and she told him, 'he looked in the mirror one day and couldn't see himself. And he began to scream' (*Finding the Centre* 70). Not knowing this detail when he wrote the novel, Naipaul gave his father-character his own form of neurosis, as he described it to Satti in a letter of June 1952:

> I couldn't bear to see anyone. I couldn't bear to read, because it made me think about people; I couldn't go to the cinema; I couldn't listen to the radio. So please try to realise that for me it has been a near-miracle that I can walk in the streets without being afraid that I talk to someone and not feel to run away.
>
> (201)

Their anxiety, their desperate ambition, was something father and son shared, and became a responsibility the son felt he had to bear after the father's death, as he

acknowledged in *Finding the Centre*:

He never talked to me about the nature of his illness. And what is astonishing to me is that, with the vocation, he so accurately transmitted to me – without saying anything about it – his hysteria from a time when I didn't know him: his fear of extinction. That was his subsidiary gift to me. That fear became mine as well. It was linked with the idea of the vocation: the fear could be combated only by the exercise of the vocation. And it was that fear, a panic about failing to be what I should be, rather than simple ambition, that was with me when I came down from Oxford in 1954 and began trying to write in London. (72)

Probably the biggest dichotomy between Naipaul's later life narrative and what is evident in the letters is his attitude to his Trinidad childhood, especially as it related to his writing. In *The Enigma of Arrival*, he describes 'the separation of man from writer' which occurred when he left Trinidad for England in 1950:

> And then, but only very slowly, man and writer came together again. It was nearly five years … before I could shed the fantasies given me by my abstract education. Nearly five years before vision was granted me, quite suddenly one day, when I was desperate for such an illumination, of what my material as a writer might be. I wrote very simply and fast of the simplest things in my memory.
> (135)

But in April 1951, he was writing home, advising his father that 'he should begin a novel. He should realise that the society of the West Indies is a very interesting one – one of phoney sophistication. … Describe the society just as it is – do not explain or excuse or laugh' (87). August 1953, and he is himself writing about Trinidad, it seems: 'My, the stories that I seem to be writing. There is no lack of material. I feel sure a three-month stay in Trinidad would keep me writing for three years' (293). The suddenness of his revelation in 1954, 'that afternoon in the Langham Hotel,' of his 'Port of Spain memories, disregarded until then' (*Finding the Centre* 20) – a 'tract of experience I hadn't before contemplated as a writer' (26), must therefore be exposed as a later adjustment of memory, a dramatic turning point in his career narrative which is, in essence, a fiction.

His distrust of plots stayed with him, though, from that Oxford period. 'Plot,' he told Stephen Schiff in 1994, 'assumes that the world has been explored and now this thing, plot, has to be added on. Whereas I am still exploring the world. And there is narrative there, in every exploration. The writers of plots know the world. I don't know the world yet' (148). However, he may, if he were to re-read his letter of December 1950, wince as the reader does at his youthful arrogance towards another writer who expressed a similar opinion:

I met a bunch of West Indians the other day. … Selvon was there, with his wife, and Gloria Escoffery. Gloria is a girl who, Harrison tells me, will be somebody one day. From the look of her, I doubt it. She passed around a manuscript of a short story she had written about the race problem. She didn't want me to see it. Then she began talking some rubbish about writing being an exploration. 'I write because I don't understand. I write to explore, to understand.' Me: 'Surely you're starting from the wrong end. I always thought people understood before they wrote.' … She was writing a short story to explain the colour problem. … I said, 'My dear Gloria, why not write a little pamphlet on the colour question, and settle the whole affair?' (45-6)

This gauche assurance is one aspect of the extreme sensitivity that has always characterised Naipaul as a writer and, it seems, as a man. One might imagine that he privately relived this conversation many times with a horrified shudder. His editor,

Diana Athill, says that 'he was born with a skin or two too few' (Schiff 141). His great gift is to distil that hypersensitivity, and his compulsion to voice his opinions, in the most serene and elegant prose, which nevertheless manages to convey anxiety and disquiet held, temporarily, at bay.

In 1949, before he left Trinidad, he wrote to Kamla, 'I am longing to see something of life. You can't beat life for the variety of events and emotions' (9). Life, then, was something he felt happened outside Trinidad, something he had to travel to discover. It is not strange that he felt this way: after all, what seventeen-year old does not wish to leave home and start living? The dream of independence and adventure, however, must often have seemed illusory during those years. The double bind of distance from family and poverty must have at times felt crippling, despite the bravado of some of the letters. Problems which could have been solved by a little money, like faulty typewriters, loom large – the first sentence of the first letter in the book is 'I wonder what is the matter with this typewriter' (3), and in May 1952, he announces that 'In August last year, I think, my typewriter was fatally dislocated. You have perhaps already noted that it is only since then that my letters have grown scarce. I find it difficult to write with pen or pencil' (191). Seepersad's excuse for not writing is often a lack of airletter forms. The simplest material lacks and desires, seldom mentioned in later narratives, are invested in these letters with the emotional uncertainties and longings of the correspondents. There are the constant appeals for cigarettes to be sent. Cigarettes represented, for the young Oxford student, a passport to the friendship of his fellow students. And each is always promising to send the other money, although neither have anything to spare, and the smallest accident – broken glasses, new tyres needed for the car – makes the promised gift impossible after all. These details impress on one the sheer human cost of a young man – really still a boy – striking out from his home, the only world he has ever known, travelling halfway across the world to land full of strange customs and unfamiliar food. He had relatives in London, it is true, but they were hostile, and he soon found ways of managing without their help.

These letters are priceless, invaluable. In fifty years from now, will we be able to live through the early years of struggle of a future great artist in this way? Will there be a record like this for inquisitive readers to devour? Present-day forms of communication are more evanescent. Perhaps there will be collections of email messages, or downloaded chat sessions, but it is hard to imagine that they will have the charm of a correspondence such as this. The question remains, however, of what is the intended audience for this book. It has no index, and the notes are sketchy. The notes would have been made considerably more useful by the simple addition of the reference word from the text. Each person, for example, is only identified in the notes the first time they are mentioned, and with no headwords, they cannot be retraced by a scan of the notes if they are mentioned again, which places more strain on the reader's memory than is reasonable. A biographical index would have been even more useful.

This lack of editorial apparatus makes the book frustrating for both the general reader and the scholar. And for the general reader, it is a book which cries out for photographs. Photographs are occasionally sent back and forth with the letters: some of them must be still extant in the Naipaul archive. There is one which has been published several times to illustrate book reviews, showing Seepersad with five of his children, and another of him sitting on the bonnet of his car which appeared in *The New York Review of Book*s in January 2000. It is unfortunate that the book did not make use of them.

But it remains a delightful book, an unrivalled source of insight into one of our most important writers, providing all sorts of illumination into the development of his art, and of his personality. For the sake of *A House for Mr Biswas* and *The Enigma of Arrival*, one is prepared to forgive a great deal. For the sake of the young man revealed in these letters, and also for his beloved father, who suffered and sacrificed day by day for his family's welfare, it will perhaps even be possible for those of his fellow West Indians whom he has enraged with his outspoken refusal to endorse any nationalist ideals, and with his oft-expressed horror of limited, colonial, 'half-made' societies, to forgive the extraordinarily complex being whom that young man became.

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Chapter VI

Myth as the Structure of Meanings : An Interpretation of Girish Karnad's *Yayati*

O.P. Budholia

Girish Karnad manages the conditionings of human behaviour and the claims of the conflicting identities in the structural plan of *Yayati***.** With the uppermost skills of a dramaturge he contrives to control the total effects of the myth in such a way as to create the tension and the inner conflict for causing to appear in visible form the maximum effects of the myth on human behaviour and to reveal the cultural dialectics of India's past. It appears visibly that Karnad, in addition to associating the serious and tragic forms of the dramatic motifs, works out as a skilled dramatist the theory of *bhavas (*emotions) which include the new mode of theatrics and traditions:

> My generation was the first to come of age after India became independent of British rule. It therefore had to face situation in which tensions implicit until then come out in the open and demanded to be resolved without apologies or self justification: tensions between the cultural past of the country and its colonial past, between the attractions of Western modes of thought and our own traditions, and finally, between the various visions of the future that opened up once the common cause of political freedom was achieved. This is the historical context that gave rise to my plays and those of my contemporaries. [1]

The textual citation reflects distinctly the following aspects of the emerging tension and conflict; the mode of various conflicting identities, the extents of the variation and the inherent conflict, the sottovoce of cognitive contents, the efficacy of various *bhavas* (emotions) and finally the realization of *tattvartha* (symbolization) that emanates from the suggestive pattern of the mythic world. Girish Karnad in his *Afterword* appended to the text of the play causes to rebound the possibilities of the manifold meanings of the myth.

> While I was writing the play, I saw it only as an escape from my stressful situation. But looking back, I am amazed at how precisely the myth reflected my anxieties at that moment, my resentment with all those who seemed to demand that I sacrifice my future. By the time I had finished working on *Yayati* – during three weeks it took the ship to reach England and in the lonely cloisters of the University the myth had enabled me to articulate to myself a set of values that I had been unable to arrive at rationality. Whether to return home finally seemed the most minor of issues: the myth had nailed me to my past (73-74).

Three facts are to be apprehended in the textural citation of *Yayati:* the concern of his anxieties, the articulation of different segments to a particular vision and the nail of rationality emerging from the anthropological issues and the signifiers of ancient Indian culture. The anthropic principles, genetical problems, heritability concerns, racial distinctions and philosophical references are made applicable to the structural plan of this play. Karnad ignores the sensibility of singular mode and thus creates the effects of plurality while decoding the linguistic meanings of the myth and brings them into being through various characters in dramatic action. The dramatist knows it well that the emotional history and the anthropological rationality can hardly be ignored for making the judicious assessment of the anthropic principles of literature, the anthropocentric concerns and the anthropogenic realities. Our ability to see and to perceive is that our moral progression depends on analyzing the psychological, linguistic and anthropological motifs and at the same time to make their application to the morals of human life. Moral progress of humanity en masse is no more inevitable, irreversible, "monolithic or unilinear than evolutionary or scientific progress. But it is a rational fact of anthropology"[2]. For the probing of the mythical effect and its impact on the emotional and thinking level, it seems appropriate to analyse the linguistic and suggestive form of the myth itself:

> In the case of literature, we know more or less how to proceed.... . In the case of myths however, the situation is quite different: considerable efforts and perspicacity is required to construct the cultural context that provides clues to the nature of possible codes, and we start without a sense of meaning which would enable us to evaluate the description of myths. The analyst must, therefore, discover both structure and meaning. [3]

Myth when analysed linguistically and semiotically brings forth its multilayers of meanings and allows in its coded range the generation of each era to write large a new message which is to be re-coded in times to come. Thus, the myth always remains an ever fresh text for the resolution and the dissolution of conflict in literature. The recondite meaning in the structure of myth makes an addition, deduction and concession of incorporating the modes of conflict and tension in the form of literary works. The linguistic properties and the suggestive meanings inherent in it make the reader to think of the impossible range of human thoughts and culture.

Girish Karnad at the outset of the structure of his play weaves the gossamer threads for decoding the subtle yet suggestive meanings that come out of the hidden layers of the myth of Yayati. In the very beginning of the play, *Sutradhara* introduces the readers about the tradition of Sanskrit drama. As "the holder of strings", *Sutradhara* reminds the connoisseurs of dramatic art about the tradition of the puppeteer and reveals the theoretic aspects and the essentials of oral tradition of literature. Karnad also follows the tradition of Sanskrit drama and makes an authoritative presence of the *Sutradhara* for presenting the plot-structure of his play:

Chapter VI

> I am the person who had conceived the structure here, whether of brick and mortar or of words. I have designed and created the stage. I am responsible for the choice of the text (Prologue 01).

Indian Sanskrit drama follows the secular mode, for drama is the reflection of the three worlds and has been acknowledged as the fifth Veda. If the Vedic texts work out the rituals of sacrifice, the art of performance signifies an approach to sacrifice in the secular way. The dramatic artists in India took centuries in order to ignore the religious nature of drama *(Yatra)* and followed the principles of Bharata who makes the art of drama "a mirror of the doings of the world *(loka-carita)*"[4] -- a secular form of emotional expression for the common entertainment of the common people of society. In his *Prologue* Karnad seems to follow the tradition of Sanskrit drama and makes it a media for the universalization of human values. The words of *Sutradhara* in the *Prologue* of the play show Girish Karnad's secular form of the dramatic art, the range of the myth and his visionary prospects:

> Our play this evening deals with an ancient myth. But let me rush to explain, it is not mythological. Heaven forbid! A mythological aims to plunge us into the sentiment of devotion. It sets out to prove that the sole reason for our suffering in this world is that we have forsaken our gods… . There are no deaths in mythological, for no matter how hard you try, death cannot give meanings to anything that has gone before. It merely empties life of meaning. Our play has no gods. And it deals with death. A key element in its plot is the '*Sanjeevini Vidya'* (the art of reviving the dead (5-6).

The metaphor of "Sanjivini Vidya" serves two Intents of the dramatist: the sentiment of fear and the quenchless lust for the fulfilment of desire. The desire as the seed of all human thoughts motivates a man for transgressing the social and moral codes of life. Out of the substance of desire, inner yearnings of humans and gods have been involving themselves constantly from the time immemorial for mastering the art of "Sanjivini vidya" or to master the fear of death. The myth of Devayani and Kacha has been woven within the range of another myth; and the readers have been told about the defeat of Devayani in her first love with Kacha – a Brahmin boy who came to Sukracharya for mastering the art of "Sanjivini vidya". He refuses the demand of Devayani for her marriage with him saying that he is like her brother who was brought up in her family with the caresses of her father. The refusal of Kacha made Devayani furious and she cursed him that he would not be able to use the knowledge of sanjivini in future. Kacha, in return, cursed Devayani to the effect that no Brahmin should ever ask her hand in marriage.

It is this myth which extends the structural meanings of the *Yayati* myth. The bathing scene in the forest shows the effects of the curse. In the lone place of the

forest Devayani and her friend, the daughter of Daitya King, Sharmishtha, were taking bath. The incident that took place here was that the wanton wind scattered the clothes of Devayani and Sharmishtha and the scattering of the clothes resulted in the exchange of their clothes they wore. This incident led to a furious quarrel, and Sharmishtha pushed Devayani into a well and she finally came back to her palace. When the king came to know about this incident, he begged pardon of his teacher, the great Shukracharya and promised his teacher that he would send Sharmishtha as a slave of Devayani whenever and wherever she went after her marriage. Girish Karnad as a dramaturge works on the psychology of the woman and analyses how a woman becomes enemy to another woman because of her jealous nature; he analyses the interior regions of woman's psyche with conflicting conditions. It is a woman against a woman who burns in the fire of jealousy and humiliation:

> In woman the greatest and the loveliest, and the basest and the ugliest are found side by side; no man can be so good as the woman, but, then, too, none so bad as she.[5]

The passage interprets the woman's inside which hardly fits in the outside reflection. It explores two major psychogenic traits of woman's psyche: the ever burning greed of sex and the nature of polyandric passion. In the case of Devayani and Sharmishtha's relationship, there comes an opportunity when they become mistress and slave respectively. Devayani, a Brahmin girl, breaks the social code while marrying *Yayati*, a Kshatriya boy. After her marriage, Sharmishtha follows her to the palace of Yayati as a slave. Devayani and Sharmishtha live together happily. But the ever burning desire of Sharmishtha remains in violent passion. As a slave of her mistress, she always keeps a deceptive nature and maintains rivalry in the love of Devayani; she finally succeeds in winning the love of Yayati and in sharing his bed. This moment becomes a greatly elevated moment for presenting the inner conflict of dramatic art. Devayani is so angered after knowing the extramarital relationship of her husband with Sharmishtha that she decides to leave the company of Yayati despite of the information of Pooru's arrival in the palace. Thus Devayani becomes with her pride and arrogance a *rara avis* among Indian heroines.

Amidst such conflicting conditions, the dramatist genuinely explores the hidden and latent human emotions by which he reveals the inner conflict between two women. The following dialogues among Yayati, Sharmishtha and Devayani bring to the fore the range of inner conflict that creates the *sthayin* of *jugupsa* (disgust):

> Devayani: What do you want? You have had her. All right. That is over and done with. I now want her out of our sight.
>
> Yayati: (to Swarnlata) : You heard me, I want her kept under watch. If she disappears, someone will pay for it with his life.

> Devayani : Let her go! Don't you have enough concubines to keep you occupied?
>
> Sharmishtha: Me his concubine? You must be joking Yes, I got him into bed with me. That was my revenge on you. After all, as a slave, what weapon did I have but my body? Well, I am even with you now. And I am free. I shall go where I please.
>
> Yayati (to Sharmishtha) : You are not fooling any one (To Devayani) I am not out to make her my conclubine. She will be my queen (28-29).

The dialogic arrangement of the proposition suggested in the textual citations becomes symbolic of the technique which raises the inner conflict among various characters. The complication of the narrative reaches to the serious motifs when the arrival of Pooru and Chitralekha in the palace is declared. The use of metaphoric syntax is arranged by the dramatist for highlighting the effect of the myth and for showing the conflict and tension in human relationship. As a matter of fact, the Yayati myth comes to its full swing in the episode which controls the direction of dialogic mode between Yayati and Chitralekha, Poora's wife. The interior motifs of the myth are given the shape of the anorexia nervosa and an oral impregnation in the contents of the structure. The myth as a palimpsest interprets human sexuality as manifest in the interaction between man and woman, and brings to the fore some definitive pebbles from anthropological field of studies. The operation of the myth becomes symbolic of the two aspects in the two specific ways: the hypothesis of psychoanalytic trends and the transference of the coded meanings in the specific syntax.

Karnad manages skillfully the disconcerning abilities and contradictory theories in the text of *Yayati*. The triangulation in love makes the trialogue (Yayati, Sharmishtha and Devayani) which reveals the subtle linguistic signifiers for manifold issues such as the differentiation between the Brahmanical and the non-Brahmanical, *devas* and *asuras* and Aryans and non-Aryans set up of society. The leitmotif of the play does not lie in the exigencies of life, but in the fear psychosis of death. Hence the art of *Sanjivini Vidya* as the linguistic metaphor lies intrinsic to all the incidents of the play and it requires to be decoded linguistically and semiotically in terms of the explicit and implicit meanings of the myth itself. The claim for conflicting identities in the complicated structure of the plot reveals the psychic zone of cognition and perception. The myth of Yayati precisely integrates the sensual height and becomes symbolic of the oral tradition of literature and the culture of India. The device of oral tradition begins with the origin of humanity. Even the *Vedas* or *Illiad* are the flowering of *Sruti* or oral culture of writings. Thus, the orality of literature lies buried as the latent sentiment in communitarian togetherness and puts emphasis strongly on the sacral/sacred rites or symbols. The spoken words and not the written text interweave and integrate human beings into associative units and groups.

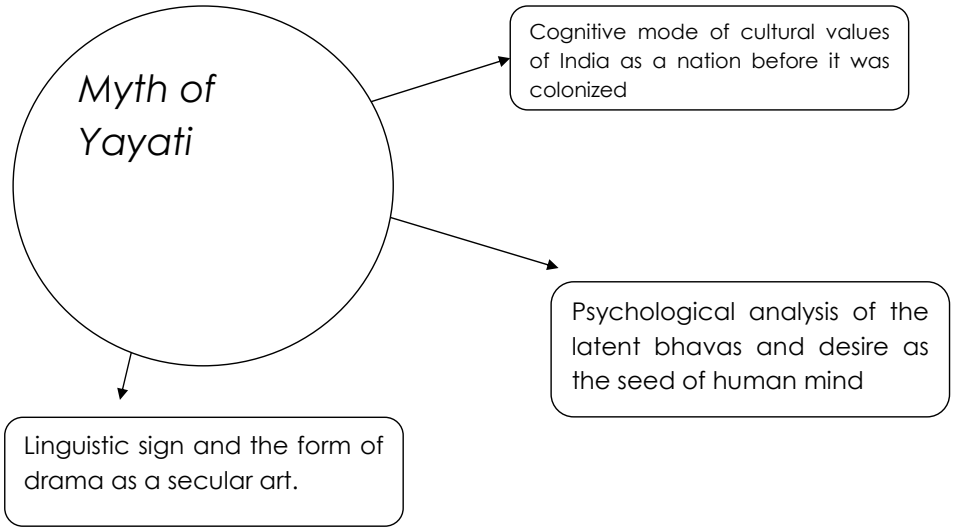
The oral text with its universal principles brings into relation the heterogeneous objects of life, while the written text and the print denigrate the real motifs of literature. The oral word and the tradition it builds is inexorably linked with an important question: how to lead to a successful and balanced attitude towards life? Thus, the tradition creates the world of faith and belief which can be synoymized as the sacral world. Derrida too holds his view on the same line, remarking that "there is no linguistic sign before writing".[6] In other words, the written text alone can or does behave as a sign. This is because the thought builds its nest primarily in speech and not in text. The text as the literary expression holds its meanings through references of the visible symbols which result in the distortedness of existent meanings of linguistic utterance. In *Yayati,* the myth itself becomes a text which works for the oral signs. Thus, the text as context develops the realistic pattern and the microwave system of cultural properties.

Girish Karnad follows the tradition of anti-Vedic stance of Sanskrit drama for the structural plan of *Yayati*. Drama to Karnad always remained a media to work out the cultural properties of a nation, on the one hand, and to analyse the universal validity of human relations, on the other. Drama in India always promoted the interest of plural motifs with a subtle message to be followed in life. The patron of Indian drama was King Nahusa who was an anti-Vedic if not a non-Aryan king. He pleaded for the secular form of drama which could present a foundation beyond the level of caste, creed and religion:

> King Nahusa whom we know from the early Vedic days and who figures even in the epic literature is spoken of as the first patron of drama in the mortal world. His very name "na-hut" (non-sacrifice) speaks of anti-vedic tendencies and his quarrels with the Gods and the Brahmins are handed down in legendary lore.[7]

Girish Karnad chooses the myth of Yayati from the *Mahabharata* for working out the plural and the secular motifs of drama, for King Yayati descends from the family of King Nahusa. Karnad also follows the tradition which maintains the happy ending of the drama.

On the basis of the hypothetical and analytical proposition made so far for the various facets such as the anthropocentric element of anthropology, the anthropometrics as the psychological analysis of the latents and the problem of linguistic sign as text, there emerges in relation with the myth a diagram for the intensive and extensive study of the text:



The process of decoding the myth-oriented text of *Yayati* gives back an image of the cultural signs and the psychological conflict between Yayati and Devayani, on the one hand, and Yayati and Chitralekha, on the other. The cultural tension and the psychogenic traits of human personality make it mandatory to analyse the contents of the myth even beyond the impossible range of human relationships, for the myth in its analysis of the native glosses and the myth in its psychological analysis bring forth two distinct meanings. With no religious and mythological connotations, Girish Karnad shows an ever-going metaphor of *devasur sangram* (the fight between gods and demons) in order to make the motif of *Sanjivini Vedya* explicit in the text. Again, Karnad unfolds the secrets of the metaphor of life and death in analyzing the various layers of the myth of Yayati:

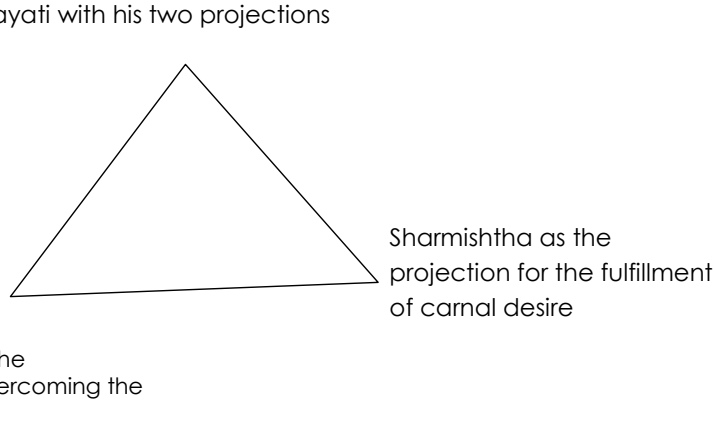
> Our play has no gods and it deals with death. A key element in its plot is the Sanjivini Vidya – the art of reviving the dead which promises release from the limitations of the fleeting life this self is trapped in. The gods and the rakshasas have been killing each other from the beginning of time for the possession of this art. Humans have been struggling to master it. Sadly, we aspire to become immortal but cannot achieve the lucidity necessary to understand eternity. Death eludes definition. Time coils into a loop, reversing the order of youth and old age. Our certainties crumble in front of the stark demands of the heart.(6).

The oft-repeated metaphor of Death becomes symbolic and suggestive of the cognizance and the perceptivity of human behaviour. The imaginative perception of death as the linguistic metaphor becomes phonic and admissible to different

variations in the character and the personality of king Yayati. The theatrics in the structure is contrived to receive the young prince, Pooru, and his newly wedded wife Chitralekha to the palace. The opening pages of the play disclose Yayati with his two projections: the one for fulfilling his carnal desire and the other for the immorality of life. Here is Sharmishtha who represents the first projection of Yayati:

> Yayati the scion of the Bharata dynasty. He is not sort of woman, is he? Women of his own kind Sensuous kshatriya maidens.... But he chooses you. Why? You know the answer. You, only you, could lead him to the ultimate goal: a sanctuary beyond the reach of death. Ah! The joy of turning the funeral pyre of one's kinsmen into alters for one's own fire sacrifice (11).

The two projections of Yayati can be diagrammed thus:



Yayati marries Devayani, a Brahmin girl because of his fear-psychosis of mastering the forces of death, for she is the daughter of great Shukracharya, the teacher of demons. Sharmishtha, as the slave of Devayani, reminds her about her superiority of the race, and also reminds her about her marriage with Yayati. Except these facts,she has nothing extraordinary in her to lure the attention of Yayati:

> I had every thing. Beauty, education, wealth. Everything except birth – an Arya pedigree. What was your worth? That your father knew the Sanjeevini spell (10).

Karnad analyses the two opposites of a woman: nature and culture. The conflict (*virodha*) appears usually in the text when the dramatist puts in appropriate relation

the two independent and equally strong contrary aesthetic sentiments which abide in the same hero together or in quick succession. But there is "no conflict between two contrary aesthetic sentiments of unequal strength in the same hero or between two contrary aesthetic sentiments of equal strength abiding in two heroes".[8] Karnad in his argumentative mode makes the extent of jealousy in Sharmishtha pellucid when she replies the question of Devayani:

> I opened my eyes. You had become the queen of Arya race. Wife of king Yayati. And I was your slave. My eyes have no lids now. I live staring at you, unflinching like the fish. No, like the gods. No more a corpse, its eyes wide open. As the king crawls into your bed night after night, I want you to remember I am there, hovering around (11).

Karnad aims at resolving the universal element of literature. The two women before the arrival of Chitralekha in the palace stir to action the original seed of desire in Yayati and at the same time both the women deliberate on the polyandric nature of a woman. Sharmishtha, in her extramarital relationship with Yayati, warns him about the fire of passion and comments that "better douse it before it explodes into a conflagration" (24). Again, in her dialogic series with Yayati, Sharmishtha says that Yayati cannot "marry every woman" he has "slept with" (14). Moreover, the spiteful relations of Yayati are revealed when he regards Devayani a mismatch to his lustful life. He thus asks Sharmishtha to stay with him in the palace just to experience the whole of his desire: "Yayati: Quite. Devayani will deprive me of my choice if she takes you away. So, I shall have to take measures to prevent that from happening... . I am making you my queen" (25-26).

Sharmishtha as the first projection of Yayati's life shares his emotional and physical predilection and attraction. All the characters before Pooru's arrival burn their inside with the emotion of disgust *(jugupsa*) which makes all of them tense. The story of Devayani and Kacha, Swarnlata and her husband and Sharmishtha and Yayati present the culminating points of inner conflict when they have been shown with the emotion of disgust. Devayani as the symbol of *sattvaic bhava* sees the animal images in the nature of Sharmishtha. The images used by Devayani for Sharmishtha such as "treacherous hyena" and "reptile" are symbolic of her geneological nature. The exteriorization of the extent of Devayani's jealousy can be perceived in her confession before Sharmishtha: "I will not be able to sleep a wink while his hands caress your body" (33).

This kind of tension can only be felt when we analyse the nature of a woman in the light of Indian tradition and culture. The two examples, the first from Manu and the other from *Agnipurana*, are referred to showing the nature of a woman:

> woman's love is intoxicating draught of the three worlds; but while wine only clouds when it is drunk, woman robs the understanding, if she is

> but looked on; and so she has infatuated the highest of the gods and wise men.[9]

Again,

> Woman's very nature involves the destruction of men. The men of understanding do not cling over much to the fair . They (women) belong indeed to those four things of the world, but especially of nobles and princes, which are often referred to also in the epic: wine, dice, hunting and women and among these four was shared the dreadful monster made by *cyavana*, *mada* or intoxication (drunkenness, lust, pride etc.) as is often shared elsewhere, and several times in the epic. [10]

These two citations become symbolic and indicative of Indian culture and Indian philosophy so far as the marital relation of the family is concerned. Even in *the Bhagvadgita*, one is reminded that the desire for lust takes away the discrimination of man (*harati Prajanam*). Therefore, the man of understanding or reason does not cling either of the two. The dramatist analyses the myth in such a way as he proves the implicit and the explicit motifs which Yayati possesses with the excess of lust and desire-the elements which will certainly ruin his life. The myth prepares the way that is to be fully worked out for the theory of latent *bhavas* (emotions) with their universal application to human behaviour. Yayati feels "bewitched" in the presence of Sharmishtha. The adjective "bewitched" comes near to the intoxicating effect of anything on any one. In the body of this text, it has been analysed that a woman as nature leaves a spell or an incantatory effect on man; and the text of this play also reveals the negative effect of Sharmishtha on Yayati. Yayati confesses the enchanting and intoxicating effect of Sharmishtha on him:

> I have never felt so entranced by a woman. What is it? Is it some spell she has cast. Some secret sorcery? I can feel youth bursting within me again. Her beauty, her intelligence, her wit, her abandon in love. Not to marry her is to lose her. I must have her. I have to keep her with me. Please, try to understand (30).

The textual lines bring forth the expressive and the possessive form of Yayati. The expressions such as "entranced", "spell", "Youth bursting" and the conditional "have to" analyse the pitiable and miserable mental states of Yayati. The spell-bound effect of Sharmishtha on Yayati creates in him the emotive possessiveness over her body and mind. Devayani comes to know the secret and passionate relationship of Yayati with Sharmishtha. She decides now to revolt against the extramarital relationship by leaving the palace of her husband. Out of anger and jealousy, Devayani even forgets the courtesy to receive the newly wedded couple in the palace. She finally leaves the house and comes to her father, Shukracharya; and he in a fit of his rage *(Krodha)* curses Yayati. Sharmishtha informs him about this curse:

> He has got a curse on his majesty—that he will lose his youth and become decrepit by night fall. I fell to his feet. I begged him to remember that his Majesty had saved Devayani's life. But he wouldn't listen (41).

The emotions of desire and aversion produce sorrow and rage. It is the desire which is symbolic of awakening the latent *bhavas*. If the intensity of desire remains unfulfilled because of the fault of the realization of original emotion (*Rasa dosa*), the emergence of *krodha* (anger) arises; and from anger comes the emotion of aversion with its aesthetic *sthayin (jugupsa)* disgust for the cherished object. As a matter of fact, the seed of all action lies in desire which finally ends into the sentiment of attachment; and the excessive of attachment begets in men/women the sense of delusion which causes to continue in him/her ignorance.

In the first scene of the play, one sees King Yayati with his carnal desire – a desire that never meets its end. But the gradual growth of the plot structure provides an indication to the growth of the emotion of aversion. The desire as the latent emotion converts into *jugupsa* and finally it becomes the central motif of the structure of the play. Desire if unfulfilled creates the emotion of anger (k*rodha*) which makes one lose good sense or causes the lack of judgment. After knowing the curse of Shukracharya, Yayati in his rashness blames and rebukes Sharmishtha:

> Go? You are out of your mind. You want me to spurn the hand Shukracharya has extended and crawl into the funeral pyre? You want me to be dependent on you, don't you? You trapped me once and you want me to stay trapped, clinging to you for survival. Women, will you never give up your demonic machination? (46).

According to Indian philosophic system, all *bhogas* (instinctual pleasures) should be extinguished in order to sink into a great ocean of *moksha* (deliverance). The desire in man, however, comes to its extinction after performing many years of austerities. The end of desire takes off the ignorance from *chitta* and it enkindles in man the essence of life *(tattvartha*):

> Like the evidence of senses which more often than not goes unquestioned, the metareality of a culture is also rarely summoned for conscious examination; yet it ever exercises an influence on individual thought and behaviour that is somewhat comparable to the working of the reality and pleasure principles. Instinctual and reality demand, it seems, have their counterpart in cultural imperatives. Denial of these imperatives can create tension and disease in the individual.[11]

The three specific properties of culture are suggested: the turmoil of the consciousness, the culture as cognizance and the proportionate balance between the

two. Thus, the culture as the total sum of social and moral values determines significantly the behavioural attitudes of human beings.

In the continuing effects of the myth on the structural plan of the play, the incidents that capture and arrest the deeper sensibility for our conscious layers of the mind are the departure of Devayani and the curse of Shukracharya. These two incidents fix for the decisive role of the myth-operation in the remaining structure of the play; they also bring forth the cultural tension and the dramatic conflict in full swing. Yayati begs the youth from his son, Pooru, and he bestows it to his father for some specific causes; and he holds his decrepitude and his old age. His wife Chitralekha does not approve of her husband's sacrifice. Thus, the conflict between the idealism of culture and the biological realism arises in the structural plan of the play. The denial for holding the decrepitude of the king by the subjects makes Pooru hold the old age of Yayati who is also his father: "There is a person willing - indeed keen – to accept his curse. But father was not ready to hear his name" (50).

Now, it the curiosity of Sharmishtha arises and she asks his name and Pooru tells her his own name. Sharmishtha makes him understand that this kind of "self-sacrifice is a rank perversion". The adjective-noun phrase "rank perversion" decodes the central metaphor of the myth. The adjective "rank" denotes the range of foul smell especially of something bad that breaks the moral code of society and the noun "perversion" is linked directly or indirectly with the sexual act. Thus, the phantasmagoric vision or the emotion of *bibhatsa* is apparently discernible in the structural plan of the play.

Pooru accepts the curse of his father with the sense of disease. He swindles between the polarities of two cultures: Vedic and anti-Vedic. He thinks of associating all with the geneology of King Nahusa and of going back to the geneology of his ancestors in order to realize the responsiveness of his conflicting identities and social and moral values. He does not feel the sense of satisfaction like Aravasu in *theThe Fire and the Rain* because of the spasm of his "imminent birth" and confesses candidly before Sharmishtha : "I want to root myself back in my family. I want to realize the vision that drove my ancestors"(50). Pooru undergoes the sense of tension and conflict between his cognition and perception : to go back to his roots means to realize the geneological branches of the tree. Sharmishtha, again, asks about the future conditions of Chitralekha when he upholds the curse of his father. His remark becomes a fine piece of the conflicting conditions about his birth and parentage : "I am like an infant on the brink of birth. Please, don't shove me back with that name"(50).

Pooru thus upholds the curse of his father with the shift to some definitive nuances in linguistic and syntactical forms. The scene arranged between Chitralekha and Swarnlata gives back an image of the specific note which becomes noticeable for the oral tradition of literature, the culture of India and the complicated variations in the nuptial relationships. When she hears the self-sacrifice of Pooru in accepting the decrepitude of his father, she becomes sensible of honour and personal relation. She

as a wife approbates with self-respecting attitude the act of her husband: "I thought he was an ordinary man"(55). The sum total of "father's transgression" makes Pooru "empty and shrivelled". The ideality of the cognitive mode changes according to the variations in the realistic apprehension of society. Prof. Gananath's remark shows the true nature of women and it too becomes relevant even to the range of Yayati myth:

> Since the Hindu female role ideal of "Pativrata" (chaste and obedient wife) pertains to sex and aggression, the implementation of the ideal in the socialization process entails the radical proscription of sexual and aggressive activity which on the personality level demands the radical and continued control of sex and aggression drives.[12]

Memories (episodic and semantic) become text and pretext in relation to Indian society and culture. The literary creations in India are to be judiciously examined through the exertion of the machinery of cybernetics of cultural traits and the act of operating the layers of myth in the creative process. Karnad in the structural design of *Yayati* coalesces together the Western theories and the Eastern principles of literature. The ideation of the theory of "Pativrata" swindles when Chitralekha meets Yayati in the youth of her husband. To manage the device of proscenium for the dialogues between Chitralekha and Yayati exhibits the dramatic skills of Karnad. Indian belief that the woman is demanding and dangerous when repulsed is the central motif of Karnad in the analysis of the myth. In his first meeting with Chitralekha, Yayati makes vainly her understand the emerging reality : "Now act in a manner worthy of Anga Princess and Bharata Queen. Act so that generations to come may sing your glory and Pooru's"(61).

The capricious ideation of Yayati and the stark biological realities of Chitralekha question respectively the tension and the conflict of a young lady. Life as an impression hardly satisfies the crafty mode of idealistic principles. In his dialogues, Yayati evinces the psychogenic traits such as the perverted mode of his sensibility, doubts and uncertainty while facing his daughter-in-law : "I was panic-stricken lest you bring the names of both our families into disrepute"(62). Again, he sees the possibilities of "ignominy"(62) that might be worked out by her. It is the moral perversion that makes Yayati preconceive the forthcoming evils in his family. Chitralekha under the spell of her womanly nature puts some puzzling questions before Yayati for her existential search. With some penchant recriminations, she charges Yayati :

> I was keen to become your daughter-in-law. But so were you to accept me as one. Even apart from my family, because of my accomplishments, because of what I am and now you want me to meekly yield to your demands(62).

The twice repetition of the personal pronoun "I" increases the level of confidence in Chitralekha and the two times repetition of the reflexive pronoun "my" and objective

form "me" bring to the fore the possessiveness and the sentiment of inactivity in her mind. The subjective, objective and possessive forms make her generative of the questionings of identity. Out of her confidence as a regenerated being due to contextual and situational realities, Chitralekha leaves an indelible impression on the connoisseurs by her confessional mode before King Yayati : "He (Pooru) is warm, considerate and loving. I have grown up amidst Kshatriya's arrogance. His gentleness is like a waft of cool breeze"(64). Yayati's conscious level makes him apologetic when he accepts the short term borrowings of Pooru's youth and also accepts to give back it to him after sometimes. He further advises her that she "should rise above trivialities", and be "superhuman"(65). Such crafty argument of Yayti instils in her an awareness with arrogance and aggression about the fulfilment of her womanhood and she thus promises him to follow the course of her action in future according to his advice : "But when I do so, please, don't try to dodge behind your own logic"(65). In his response to Chitralekha, Yayati says, "no one has ever accused me of cowardice"(65). The encounter of Chitralekha in her rashness with Yayati sets down as a condition a wonderful example of c*hittabhrama* (illusive consciousness). and the illusive consciousness makes her bereft of reason. She thus exhibits fearlessly the darkening form of human aggression for her womanly fulfilment. Her remark that she married Pooru only for "his potential to plant the seed of Bharata in my womb. He has lost that potency now"(65); and, now, he can hardly, fulfil the promises of marriage vow. The question raised by Chitralekha becomes the highest point of aesthetics of art and the design of dramatic conflict:

> Chitralekha : You have taken over your son's youth. It follows that you should accept everything that comes attached to it. Yayati : whore ! Are you inviting to fornication? Chitralekha : Oh, come, sir; these are trite considerations. We have to be superhuman. Nothing like this has ever happened before. Nothing like this is likely to… .(66).

Indian Culture reveals the characteristics of a woman and in Indian tradition woman is demanding and her demand should be fulfilled. Depressed as she is, she picks the vial of poison and puts it to her mouth. Dying she puts a question before Yayati, expecting an answer to it : "What else is there for me to do? You have your youth. Prince Pooru has his old age. Where do I fit in"(66). Chitralekha as the wife of Pooru ignores the old age of Pooru and expands the contours of the myth when she demands her share from Yaytai. Yayati regards her "foolish", but before her death, she reverts the linguistic metaphor of foolishness to Yayati himself, and this reversion of the epithet is symbolic of cultural dialectics with reference to Indian social system: "There you are. You say I shouldn't be foolish but you can't even bring yourself to stop me." (66). In response to Chitralekha, Yayati answers in the dotted lines and with the mark of exclamation, and his answer becomes a wonderful example of *bibhatsarasa* (the emotion of disgust) which also evinces the *leitmotif* of the myth of Yayati: "No, no! It is not that. Wait … . Listen" (67).

The analysis of the text explains the id-ego matrix writ large in the deeper layers of the myth; but the union of "I" and "not I" creates in man the altruistic sentiment which finally takes off the delusive and illusive tendencies of man. Yayati undergoes the sentiment of guilt consciousness which also creates the super consciousness, fading out the sense of physical "I-ness". In this state of thinking, Yayati realizes the nucleus of life ("I thought there were two options – life and death. No. It is living and dying we have to choose between "68). This realization of the aesthetic suggestion evades the lower particles from his mind and he emerges as a regenerated being who is ready to face life with its high moral principles. Finally he gives back the youth of Pooru who rules long and wisely and has been hailed as "a philosopher king". The dross of attraction and repulsion comes out and he retires to a secluded life. One thing that brings forth the suggestive pattern is the operation of myth which opens the manifold aspects to be decoded in the text of *Yayati*.

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Chapter VII

R. K. NARAYAN'S *THE MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI* AND INDIAN MODERNITY: VALUE CRISIS IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF INDIAN TRADITION

Ludmila Volná

R. K. Narayan, an Indian author writing in English, publishes his first novel in 1935, and his last works, short stories and another narrative in the early 1990s. The period covered by his works extends then to almost sixty years. He is best known and appreciated for the creation of the imaginary south-Indian town of Malgudi, a place which, through decades, undergoes the changes brought by colonialism. As Malgudi represents "the quintessential Indianness" (Mukherjee 170, 171; the term will be dealt with in more detail later), Meenakshi Mukherjee argues, and as in this way it has "a metonymic relation with India as a whole" (Mukherjee 170-174) Malgudi's progress in time can be viewed as metonymic of India's passage through the age of modernity.

Though being the main theme in all Narayan's novels, the conflict of 'modernity' and 'tradition' is brought to its sharpest in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, published in 1961, because in this novel this conflict is presented straightforwardly as one between the two main characters. Modernity in Anthony Giddens' words includes "the institutions and modes of behaviour established first of all in post-feudal Europe, but which in the twentieth century increasingly have become world-historical in their impact." (Giddens 14, 15). India saw this impact arrive with the colonization and since then act upon her independent system of tradition, which had developed during several thousands of years.

Narayan establishes the setting of *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* in the small south-Indian town Malgudi (with which the reader may be already familiar through Narayan's earlier novels), and focuses more specifically on the place where Nataraj, one of the two main characters of the novel, is exercising his profession of a printer in the period of the second half of the 1950s. Spatial setting is of the highest importance for Narayan and in all his novels he frequently makes use of metaphors where space and objects play an important role with respect to the passage of time. Nataraj, a representative of the traditional Indian values, as we will see, seems, nevertheless, to accept with perfect ease certain aspects of the colonial heritage: for example, his little son attends the Albert Mission School, with the colonial education of which the characters of Narayan's earlier novels (Swami, Chandran, and Krishnan) used, in one way or other, to be in conflict and which then becomes emblematic of the (post-)colonial presence. At his press parlour he keeps a 'Queen Ann' chair together with the Indian-style furniture.

But Nataraj has also seen some of the traditional values already departed: the joint family[1] falls apart with the departure of his brother's family after a quarrel, which is metonymically represented by furniture, of which some pieces go away with the brother's family and some remain. The harmonium, acquired by the grandfather, is claimed by everyone; as an integral part, as it appears, of the ancestral house, it is clearly associated with tradition and its values:

> He /the grandfather/ died before he could sell and realize its *value*, and his successors took the presence of the harmonium in the corner of the hall for granted until this moment of partition. (Narayan 11. Italics added.)

Of all the objects of both the past and present one is of the highest significance: it is the blue curtain by which the parlour of Nataraj's press, its 'outer' space where he accepts clients and visitors, is separated from the 'inner' space where the press is located and the actual work of printing done. This space hides not only the press but also Sastri, formally Nataraj's staff who does the printing. But Sastri is more than that: as "an orthodox-minded Sanskrit semi-scholar" (Narayan 72), as he is called, he is educated in sacred Hindu texts, which form the very core of the Indian Hindu tradition[2] and is in fact a kind of Nataraj's 'guru'[3].

The curtain is a metaphorical division line between two opposing instances which are in conflict: the safety of the tradition, stable, sacred and respected, which becomes violated by the ruthless intrusion of modernity, as represented here by the arrival of Vasu, the other of the two main characters. This can be aptly summarized by two following quotes:

> No one tried to peer through it /the curtain/. (Narayan 8) ... He /Vasu/ came *forward*, practically tearing *aside* the curtain, an act which *violated* the *sacred traditions* of my press. (Narayan 15. Iitalics added.)

These texts reveal the nature of the impact as perceived by the affected, that is by Nataraj, a representative of the tradition. As Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin make clear in *The Empire Writes Back* criticism informed by understanding of the tradition concerned enables to discover the more profound patterns and motifs of the analysed text and help to better grasp the structure of the tradition's value system. It is relevant then, and it is what will be done in this paper, to attempt and grasp the perspective of the tradition, the very values of which are put into question and its perception of the 'modernity's impact, and to look into how the relevant culture has been coping with it (Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin 187-189).

The relevance of studying the crisis of value and judgement in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* in this perspective is made clear already through Narayan's attribution of the main parts and their specifications. The conflict of tradition vs. modernity as represented by Nataraj and Vasu respectively echoes the structure of the duality of

[1] Joint family is a traditionally structured, three generations of Indian family where parents and their sons with families live together.
[2] In this article the words 'Hindu' and 'Indian' are used interchangeably because the Hindu world and its traditions are studied.
[3] A 'guru' is a kind of master, a mentor, a spiritual leader for his pupil.

the conflict of the antagonistic forces as perceived by the Hindu cosmology. Nataraj and Vasu can thus be viewed as

> representing the differentiation of the Absolute into antagonistic yet co-operative pairs of opposites… the Absolute …. unfolded into this duality, and out of them derive all the life polarities, antagonisms, distinctions of powers and elements, that characterize the phenomenal world. (Zimmer 137, 138).

Though apparently Nataraj's and Vasu's characteristics, values, and goals are presented, first of all, as highly antagonistic, as will be analyzed below in detail, each of the two is being irresistibly attracted by the other (Narayan 96, 97) and it is through their 'co-operation' that the action of the novel occurs and is carried on. For example, when Vasu expresses the wish to stay in Nataraj's attic, Nataraj does not refuse; Vasu invites Nataraj for a short drive, Nataraj gets into his car.

By the very first sentence of the novel it is announced that Nataraj, as he lives a life of contention with a family and a good job, is not ambitious to make money he does not need, even if he has the means. Apart from family and job, which are values generally agreed upon, the latter can, in this context, be called a 'differential' value, because it is the reversed (compared to Nataraj) side of the value by which Vasu's arrival is made known: Vasu apparently comes to do business and make money. Though it is true that Vasu also appears to have no family, it is this differential value which defines the antagonism of the two forces. Not only Vasu's entrée is, as perceived by Nataraj, a violent intrusion, an invasion, as mentioned, but his physical appearance itself represents a threat, a frightening superhuman force which indicates disorder:

> … a tanned face, large powerful eyes under thick eyebrows, a large forehead and a shock of unkempt hair, like a black halo. My first impulse was to cry out, "Whoever you may be, why don't you brush your hair?" … He gave me a hard grip. My entire hand disappeared into his fist – he was a huge man, about six feet tall. He looked quite slim, but his bull-neck and hammer-fist revealed his true stature. (Narayan 15).

A threat to the Indian tradition, Vasu affronts the whole spectrum of features which constitute the 'Indianness'. By the term is meant, as Mukherjee explains, "a good-humoured inertia and a casual tolerance which almost any reader in the country is expected to recognize as familiar." (Mukherjee 170, 171). Nataraj welcomes his clients and visitors with an accommodating, light, and talkative attitude, he lets himself be little impressed by the passage of time, or the work deadlines, and he would never say 'no' to anybody (Narayan 46). It is impossible not to notice the contradictory character of Vasu's existence, 'purposeful' and 'challenging' as it announces itself: "I never say anything without a purpose." (Narayan 20) … "I challenge any man to contradict me." (Narayan 17).

A man with a 'black halo' is impelled by power which gives him his strength to prove in every possible respect his 'superiority' not only to nature, as he claims, (Narayan 16, 17), but to all his countrymen whom, because of their 'mild-heartedness,' he calls 'spineless.' (Narayan 97). Vasu is a taxidermist, which is a double challenge to the traditional values cherished by Nataraj and his friends. First of all, Vasu's total disrespect for animals (but he admitted he once killed his master by his own hands),

the approach which he calls 'science' (Narayan 16, 17) is repulsive for and makes suffer Nataraj who in his childhood was taught not only not to take lives of the animals including (birds and insects) but to protect and feed them. Secondly, dealing with the dead bodies and skins, viewed as degrading and polluting, is a traditional profession of the outcasts, untouchables in India.

Vasu's actions and behaviour attack the very essence of Indian 'cultural identity'. Sudhir Kakar, a psychoanalyst and specialist in Indian culture, mentions Freud's research which deals with the interaction of the culture and the individual in general and states: "Mediated through persons responsible for the infant's earlier care, cultural values are, from the beginning, an intimate and inextricable part of the *ego*." (Kakar 11. Hall 392, 393). In the Hindu culture, Kakar explains, the Hindu belief and behaviour is structured by 'a cluster of ideas' at the heart of which

> is a coherent, consistent world image in which the goal of human existence, the ways to reach this goal, the errors to be avoided, and the obstacles to be expected along the way are all dramatically conveyed. … (Kakar 15).

Thus the mild-hearted tolerance and different perception of time has its roots in the cosmological image of the succession of worlds where the life-span of a human does not equal even a wink of the eye of God, as well as in the concept of succession of births and rebirths of a single creature (human in one birth, perhaps not in another). The latter concept mediates also clearly the respect for animals. Being good to other creatures is necessary for each individual's life goal (according to the laws of *karma* and *dharma*), so that an appearance in the next birth could be assured as one closer to the salvation, the Unity with the Divine Absolute.

Understandably, the antagonism and estrangement between the world of traditional Indian values and the foreign influence manifests itself through identity crisis. Nataraj, who before Vasu's arrival, gives peacefully and automatically an affirmative response to the question 'is that you ?' suffers utter confusion later, which makes him contemplate on the character of the human nature and realize finally that "Vasu was like an irrelevant thought." (Narayan 131, 9, 40, 53, 62, 66).

Vasu himself asks the question 'who is he?' or 'what is it?' quite often (Narayan 16, 20, 25, 26). Not only he says anything without a purpose, nor does he do anything lacking it. His purpose, however, never includes other living creatures' purposes or interests. Everything Vasu says or does is ruled by purely pragmatic capitalist values, and to apply these fully it is first necessary to identify the surroundings. He makes the place all around him object of knowledge in order to be able to become a master of the situation (Foucault. Chrisman and Williams 7-9). Aware only too much of his strength, he bullies Nataraj and his friends and puts them to a long trial and abuse. Not only he does not pay for the printing of his visiting cards but he does not show any willingness to pay for the lodging in Nataraj's attic. Nataraj is not only exposed daily both to Vasu's literally bloody business and to his 'philosophy,' but suffers the abusive behaviour from him, such as an abduction into the countryside for nearly a whole day or a complaint against Nataraj as a landlord when the latter shows the least discontent in having Vasu in his attic.

All this makes Nataraj perceive Vasu as 'a man-eater,' the one who suppresses human values in man and destroys them, and believe sincerely in the necessity of his

(Nataraj's) 'saving humanity' (Narayan 46, 122). As Vasu's destructive force is arriving at its culmination through his ambition to kill for financial profit Kumar, a sacred elephant, whom Nataraj and his friends with much effort have just saved from death, the force antagonistic to what Vasu represents undertakes a counteraction. Kumar as the most important 'element' in a procession is a symbol of worship and as such he represents the very core of the Hindu tradition, its religious basis. As the culmination approaches, Sastri, who, with his knowledge of the sacred Hindu scriptures, represents the religion's traditional learning and its cosmologico-philosophical foundation makes an astonishing revelation of Vasu's identity:

> "He shows all the definitions of a *rakshasa*," persisted Sastri, and went on to define the make-up of a *rakshasa*, or a demoniac creature who possessed enormous strength, strange powers, and genius, but recognized no sort of restraints of man or God. He said, "Every *rakshasa* gets swollen with his ego. He thinks he is invincible, beyond every law. But sooner or later something or other will destroy him." (Narayan 72).

'No sort of restraints of man or God' is, in terms of the Hindu tradition, as we have seen, disrespect of the whole system of values cherished by humans and transmitted to them by God, as also summarized by William Walsh:

> His /Vasu's/ words and actions violate accepted *manners* and *every tradition* implicit in them. … Vasu may constitute a more obscure, profound threat to the *system* by which Nataraj and his neighbours live. (Walsh 137. Italics added).

Rakshasas, bearers of enormous strength, strange powers, and genius (Ravana, the king of *rakshasas* being the extreme example as he manages to make the Hindu deities like Vishnu, Brahma, Shiva, and others to serve him temporarily) are said to feed themselves with human meat (Filipský 134, 135, 130), which supports the identification of Vasu as 'man-eater'. The story's closure appears in perfect accordance with Sastri's interpretation of the tradition, and the conflict of the antagonistic forces as represented by Nataraj and Vasu is resolved in the accident in which Vasu intends to kill mosquitoes sitting on his forehead and, concentrating upon, as he imagines, an imminent killing of the elephant, puts in his gesture all his force and kills himself:

> …Every demon carries within him, unknown to himself, a tiny seed of self-destruction, and goes up in thin air at the most unexpected moment. Otherwise what is to happen to humanity? (Narayan 172, 173).

The Hindu tradition, however, permits another, complementary reading. This other reading is parallel and counterpart to the straightforward interpretation of Vasu's conflicting presence as a threat to 'humanity' and is established as 'a story-within-a story.' This device, which can also be called 'meaning through letters' (Volná), is currently used by Indian authors writing in English (e.g. other Narayan's novels, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Tharoor's *Great Indian Novel*). 'The story-within-the-story' which is being created alongside with the 'main story' is a work of 'a poet', one of Nataraj's closest friends and a constant presence in his parlour, and also, when being printed, work of Nataraj and Sastri. The monosyllabic poem dealing with the relation of God Krishna and his mistress Radha, a relation which, in terms of the Hindu concept of the duality of antagonistic and co-operating forces of the universe in the

appearance of the male and female forces (Zimmer 127, 137, 138), emphasises rather, because of the final union in marriage, the co-operating aspect of the duality. Being a creation with 'a new syntax' (Narayan 111) and so requiring a new grasp of language and understanding, it throws a new light upon the resolution of the conflict between modernity and tradition.

As the poet's Radha-Krishna story is itself rewritten – it is then a modern re-creation - the reading of the impact of new influences must be re-visited to enable Indian 'humanity' to survive. The resolution of the crisis is then also dual, but even though the traditional Indian values as ingrained in the Hindu religious system of belief are irrefutable, everything happens according to its cosmological pattern and can be explained as such. Thanks to its enormous richness and doctrinal tolerance, the Hindu system has permitted the absorption of alien influences without any damage for itself whenever these were brought to India. Alien presence cannot be undone and something of Vasu remains in Nataraj at the end of the novel: he is advocating 'a scientific' approach, Vasu's preferred argument, and he becomes more assertive when he demands to be paid for his work (Narayan 155, 170). Nataraj states nostalgically, "… The sanctity of the blue curtain was destroyed, gone forever…" (Narayan 166). Nevertheless Narayan, not contradictorily, lets Nataraj at the very end of the novel still embrace the values of his tradition, the source which formed his identity and that of his neighbours: "Yes, Sastri, I am at your service". (Narayan 174).

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Chapter VII

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Chapter VIII

CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE IN MALGONKAR'S "A BEND IN THE GANGES"

Jitendra Kumar

Manohar Malgonkar is one of the distinguished Indian-English novelists of our times. Primarily he is interested in history, politics, hunting, military life, and outdoor games and sports. He began his career as a historian of the Marathas, and subsequently entered the domain of Indian English Fiction. As a historical fictionist, he depicts the various aspects of a nascent emerging nation – its pre-Independence condition, its traumatic experiences of partition, and its post-Independence situation. In this respect, he is rightly bracketed with Khushwant Singh (who has written *A Train to Pakistan, 195)* and Chaman Nahal (who has penned *Azadi,* 1973). Malgonkar's novel, *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) deals with the same subject of India's woeful partition as the above-mentioned novels of Khushwant Singh and Chaman Nahal do. Here in this paper, I propose to highlight the strand of conflict and violence in Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges*.

Before *A Bend in the Ganges* is taken up for a study, it must be informed that Malgonkar has written at least five novels of lasting popularity. These novels are : *Distant Drum* (1960), *Combat of Shadows* (1962), *The Princes* (1963), *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), and *The Devil's Wind* (1972). In these novels we witness "a wonderful knock of weaving plots of singular originality,"[1] as a scholar puts it. Malgonkar's sense of history comes out vividly in them. These novels clearly demonstrate Malgonkar's unusual ability to mingle fact and fiction and to record historical truths and elements of romance and adventure side by side.

A Bend in the Ganges, a historical novel indeed, has added a new feather to the literary cap of Malgonkar. It brings out the element of conflict and violence in an eminent degree. This fact is borne out by the content of the novel.

Dedicated to Vibhakar, *A Bend in the Ganges* carries a citation from M.K. Gandhi. The novel, on its appearance, hit the book-stalls immediately and captured the attention of writers and reviewers. The well-known English novelist, E.M. Forster, considered it to be one of the three best novels of 1964, and the famous reviewer of *the Bookman*, Richard Chase, compared it with Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. The B.B.C. of London called it 'a very exciting story told with great skill.'

The title of the novel is derived from a sentence in the *Ramayana* : 'At the bend in the Ganges they paused to take a look at the land they were leaving', and it is symbolically applied here. In it the two principal characters, Debi-dayal and Gian, also pause and look longingly at their land while they are getting deported for the Cellular Jail of the Andaman Islands. Lord Rama had once left Ayodhya behind for fourteen years and Debi and Gian have also to serve a term of fourteen years in exile. This may also apply to the multimillionaire businessman, Tekchand Kerwad, the father of Debi

and Sundari, who has, at the close of the novel, to leave his home in Pakistan with a very heavy heart, nostalgically recollecting the dying words of his wife, Radha : "Please don't leave me here, darling, please take me with you…", to which he had given the reassuring reply : "No, I shall never leave you… Now rest"[2].

In his brief Note, Malgonkar tells us: "Only the violence in this story happens to be true; it came in the wake of the bloodiest upheavals of history : twelve million people had to flee, leaving their homes; nearly half a million were killed; over a hundred thousand women, young and old, were abducted, raped, mutilated". (p.6). This powerful story tries to highlight the truth that freedom is a hard-earned trophy, and that when it came to India in 1947 it was attended by violence, bloodshed, and betrayals. The history of the Indian Freedom Movement is typically represented by Gian Talwar, who is originally a follower of Mahatma Gandhi – "I am a follower of Gandhi" (p.16) – but later gets involved in a revengeful murder of Vishnu-dutt (who had earlier killed his lovable younger brother, Hari) in a family feud. Gian is prosecuted and exiled to the Andamans where he draws very close to Englishmen, particularly to Patrick Mulligan, and escapes with them in a boat bound for India at the time of the Japanese attack of the Islands, and concealing his identity earns a decent livelihood in Bombay through Tekchand and Sundari (who have come to know that he was with Debi in the Andamans Jail), but leaves it when the port of Bombay is bombarded aand reduced to ashes, and once again back to Tekchand he helps his family in various ways, partly to expiate the sin of having betrayed Debi once in the jail and partly to serve the really needy and unattended old couple along with Sundari. In the end, the reward for him is the hand of Sundari which he so keenly desires.

As a contrast to him is the hard-core, unyielding but faithful character of Debi-dayal, the terrorist, who is also an ardent lover of Mother India but who believes in the use of arms and ammunition against a mighty British Empire. He may be guessed to be the follower of Bhagat Singh, Azad and other martyrs in the cause of the country, and is once nabbed by the police for blowing up an aeroplane along with Shafi (before a misunderstanding arises between the Hindus and the Muslims), and is tried and deported to the Andamans in the same ship as carries away Gian too. Debi is a self-respecting person and once badly beats and kicks the abusive Gorkha sentry, Balbahadur, in the jail; he hates Gian for the latter's betrayal, and confides all this to his sister Sundari, who holds a very high opinion about her brother. Though he is of a steely heart, he recognises human values in Mumtaz, a Muslim woman picked up from the clutches of his erstwhile companion who is now turned a woman goer, -- the woman who nurses him back to health from the severe wounds he has received from Shafi in a scuffle for her. Flouting the rigid family traditions, Debi falls in love with her and decides to make her his wife, and informs his sister all about this episode and seeks her assistance in placating the anger of the parents on this score which Sundari readily offers. Though Sundari arrives at her parents' quite safe and sound, her brother along with his wife does not, because on his way home near the Indo-Pak border he falls a victim to the fury of the Muslims and is permanently separated from his wife in the midst of her deafening scream : "Debi! Debi, my darling! I shall never live without you! I am coming with you too … I am coming…" (p.369).

The third important character in the novel is Sundari, who is though married to an army officer of Bombay, to one named Gopal Chandidar, is in half-love with her own brother, and encourages the advances of Gian towards her when he returns from

the Andamans. Debi's arrival in Bombay brings a change in her attitude towards Gian, but the latter meets her again at her father's and looks after the whole family during the riots, and fights with Shafi and his gang in its protection, and arranges for its despatch to India under his supervision, though on the way Tekchand deserts and disappears suddenly without letting anyone know about it. His disappearance keeps readers guessing where he might have gone.

There are also some other occasions when the air of suspense hangs over the plot, *e.g.*, what happens to Mumtaz after Debi's death? But such unresolved strands are always to be found in Malgonkar's novels, and *A Bend in the Ganges* is not weakened by their presence in any way. This novel is rather Malgonkar's masterpiece which has immoralized him in the annals of Indo-English fiction.

Malgonkar is at his best in plot-weaving and story-telling. His stories are often eventful and entertaining. He is absolutely conscious of his objectives as a writer, and observes as follows:

> …I do strive deliberately and hard, to tell a story well: and I revel in incident, in improbabilities, in unexpected twists. I feel a special allegiance to the particular sub-caste among those whose caste-mark I have affected, the entertainers, the tellers of stories. Novels that do not conform to this basic pattern, however well-written they may be, are to me like unending cheese-straws, they may tickle the taste buds, but they cannot constitute a square meal – at least not to one who is used to curries and chutneys.[3]

Malgonkar's novels, as a result, are well-planned and well-constructed. And since he is very close to Indian history, his novels tend to be quite informative and knowledgeable. This applies also to *A Bend in the Ganges.*

Malgonkar's narrative technique comes out vividly in his novels. In describing an event or in unfolding a plot, he is unquestionably superb. Most of his stories are told in the third person and in the past tense, but *The Princes* and *Bandicoot Run* are exceptions to this. In these two works, the narrator is the 'I', the principal character in the story. Nowhere in the works of Malgonkar do we witness the formlessness of *The Serpent and the Rope* or the puranic style of *Kanthapura.* Though in *A Bend in the Ganges* he becomes multifaceted and epical, like the author of *War and Peace*, and he does not reach that height elsewhere. And as a historian, he does not remain detached and dispassionate at times. The obvious results are the occasional distortions of facts and figures. In this context, Meenakshi Mukherjee rightly remarks : "*A Bend in the Ganges* is not so much a story of men and women as of places and episodes, not an integrated human drama but an erratic national calendar"[4]. Malgonkar takes Englishmen as the ideal figures of honesty and integrity, and sometimes pulls down Indians for lack of sincerity and sense of justice (remember that Gian praises the English judge who acquits him of the charge of murdering Vishnu-dutt).

Malgonkar has been compared to John Masters, the celebrated author of *Bhowani Junction* (1954). To some extent, the comparison is apt, as both the authors write about certain identical themes – love and romance, sex and revellery, brave adventures and successful situations, *thugee* and highway robbery, etc. In *A Bend in the Ganges*, we have plenty of these things. But the comparison should stop there,

because Malgonkar is no imitator of anyone. He is rather endowed with a creative intelligence of the first order and has a distinct individuality of his own. Prof. Iyengar is quite correct when he remarks : "Malgonkar is not an indigenous John Masters : nor is *Distant Drum* an Indo-Anglian variation of the Anglo-Indian *Bhowani Junction.* There is, on the contrary, an authentic quality about Malgonkar and his novel that can stand scrutiny without reference to the Masters recipe."[5] Finally, Malgnkar is an authentic voice in Indian English Fiction, and his novel *A Bend in the Ganges* is, as Khushwant Singh puts it, one of the few books which are "samples of good writing by Indo-Anglian writers of today."[6] It is so because it provides plenty of conflict and violence, what Malgonkar terms as the stuff of 'curries and chutneys', affecting Mother India in the wake of her woeful partition.

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Chapter IX

The Battle of *Chronos* and *Kairos*: Mixing Genres in *The Calcutta Chromosome*

Esterino Adami

Different interpretative keys may be applied to Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996)[1], emphasising the various peculiar aspects of a novel that draws upon several genres and modes, from the postcolonial to the scientific thriller, from the postmodern to the mystery tale. In this paper I shall deal with the science fiction and postmodern strategies of textual organisation that rely on the cultural notions of *chronos* and *kairos* as the two governing paradigms of the whole novel. This type of inventive narrative plays up with a large dose of ambiguity so as to mesmerise and disturb the reader at the same time, while stories within stories emerge and articulate the plots involving Antar, Murugan, Ross and the other characters.

Let us start off by analysing the science fiction elements that Amitav Gosh subtly deploys in his work: although this is not a typical science fiction novel, I would argue that the pseudo-scientific and fantastic modalities somehow constitute the textual backbone of the book and allow the author to speculate upon several issues and twist the timelines. The incipit of the novel displays a mildly dystopian atmosphere when we are shown Antar trying to examine the remnant of an ID with the help of his powerful computer. An employee for the International Water Council, formerly known as LifeWatch, "a small but respected non-profit organization that served as a global health consultancy and epidemiological data bank" (*CC*, 7), the man lives in a slightly bleak New York. It is a futuristic landscape that, to a certain degree, is reminiscent of the urban setting of Philip Dick's Los Angels in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968).

Furthermore, the resourceful telematic tool that Antar uses is a powerful computer called Ava, a machine who can hear, speak and operate in marvellous ways. Proficient in all world languages and dialects (Mandarin, Bengali, Hindi, Arabic, the dialects of Upper Amazon, and so forth), Ava is instrumental in starting the story development. The novelist adopts the literary device of personification in the description of Ava, rendered as a "she" with a special "eye, a laser-guided surveillance camera" (*CC*, 6), and perhaps also alludes to another very famous fictional computer, namely HAL 9000 ("Heuristically programmed ALgorithmic computer") from Arthur C. Clarke's *2001 Space Odyssey* (1968), whose iconic red camera eye seemed to warn and threat the fate of mankind. Here, however, Ava is given a positive role while supporting Antar, an Egyptian-born exponent of a not too distant technocracy, in his exploration of some mysterious lives and events. The motif of the quest, which cuts across both fantasy and science fiction, generates a series of questions and acts that

[1] Amitav Gosh, *The Calcutta Chromosome*, [1996], (New Delhi, Ravi Dayal, 2000). All quotations are from this edition and inserted parenthetically with abbreviation *CC* and page reference.

are told through flash-forward and flash-back techniques. In this sense, the writer juxtaposes his work not only with futuristic literature but postmodern narrative as well.

Indeed, I would like to underscore Ghosh's numerous attempts in evoking a questioning and metaphysical milieu that encompasses all the narrative levels. In his hypnotic, darkly skewered writing, the author seems to suggest that, if we unearth cultural, historical and textual layers, we may approach inner meanings and interact with Fate. For instance, if we focus upon the episode of the paper-wrapped fish revealing some clues of the scientific enigma underlying the novel, we can observe the deft author composing some parts of a wider puzzle. With its large amount of knotted tension, the joining of apparently mundane episodes and facts mirrors the activity of looming Destiny and its mechanisms. The scene operates in the textual architecture as the apt combination of sequences of events and could be interpreted as the postmodernist realisation of casualness. To a certain extent, it echoes the eerie dynamics that Italo Calvino adopts in his *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* (1979), in which apparently insignificant incidents are linked together within a more complex design. Since the apparent chaos that dominates the intertwined stories belongs to the postmodernist vision that enquiries about life and the sense of being in its multiple forms, the malaria mystery, sketched by means of a labyrinthine reconstruction, poses more questions than answers and invests characters and readers alike. Affecting the rigid authoriality of narration, the postmodernist propensity of this novel leads towards the area of diaphanous multiplicity, so that eventually, as Subhash Chandra claims, "Ghosh does not want to achieve Murugan's truth, which in turn will become Antar's truth, to become final, transcendent, negating the possibilities of being further questioned, investigated into by others, who might come up with 'their' truths"[2]. And it is not incidental that the novel ends with a polyphonic multitude haunting Murugan's consciousness: "there were voices everywhere now, in his room, in his head, in his ears, it was as though a crowd of people were in the room with him. They were saying 'We're with you; you're not alone; we'll help you across'" (*CC*, 256).

I have made reference to science fiction and postmodernism as two possible visions that the writer delicately tangles up in his text but, in order to detect the signs of ambiguity and chaos that mark *The Calcutta Chromosome*, we also ought to consider the paratextual elements. The subtitle of the text ("a novel of fevers, delirium and discovery"), the titles of the two sections ("August 20: Mosquito Day" and "The Day After") and the opening lyric penned by Nobel-awarded Ronald Ross all contribute to the mysterious atmosphere bestowed upon this quasi-scientific thriller as they suggest or bespeak of disease, epidemic, catastrophe, invention, warnings. In other words, it is an instable world that seems to be doomed to chaos and simultaneously manipulated by secret powers.

I would like to focus upon the core duality of *kairos* and *chronos* that shape the different sequences of Ghosh's storytelling. Their opposition is closely related to the symbols of postmodernism and science fiction, and determines the incessant time shifts of the text. Essentially, the novel is organised as a triple narrative, with Antar who explores the cyberspace to find out the real identity of Murugan, probably the

[2] Subhash Chandra, "*The Calcutta Chromosome*: A Postmodernist Text", in R. K. Dhawan, edited by, *The Novels of Amitav Gosh* (New Delhi: Prestige), p. 269.

best expert on Ronald Ross, the scientist who discovered the malarial parasite during the time of the Raj. The three are textually joined together by reciprocal links and references, whilst more characters participate to the plot construction generating other minor narrative patterns. This multilayered structure, which incorporates stories within stories or connect stories to other stories, to me is an example of the skilled *mise en abîme* that Ghosh extracts from sources and models galore. Although deictic elements anchor the narration and description of people, places and times – we read about future New York, Victorian Calcutta, specific points in time, and so forth - there is a deliberate choice of lack of preciseness and clarity as the cues of the mystery gradually appear and disappear, or turn out to change their own nature or meaning. I would consider this feeling of precarious wholeness a conceptual clash between *chronos* and *kairos*.

I shall now concentrate on these two significant culture-bound concepts, which I borrow from classical Greek culture. The former refers to the chronological or sequential passing of time, the latter indicates "a time of changes" or, if we extend its semantic value, "something special or even extraordinary". *Chronos* and *kairos* represent primordial forces, respectively endowed with their quantitative and qualitative nature. In particular, we should be aware that the exact gist of *kairos* depends on who uses the term, and consequently the various protagonists re-invent or imagine its value considering their own circumstances. The magic or extraordinary moment can be the good results of Antar's research, the investigation carried out by Murugan, or the discovery of a cure for malaria in Ross' case. Every character in this novel subtly, and perhaps unconsciously, try to pursue the power of *kairos* and escape to yoke of *chronos*. Embracing the dimensions of present, past and future at the same time, Ghosh deeply reinforces the collusion of storylines and timelines, and in so doing he accelerates or delays narration on the brink of collapse, so as to achieve a high degree of suspense.

Shuttling between these two notions, the writer intermixes his stories and tackles the issue of knowledge too, perceived as burden of undecipherable values. Let us take into account a short dialogue between Antar and Murugan and let us observe how their turn-takings reveal or hide two contrasting visions:

> 'Tell me Ant', Murugan said, fixing his piercing gaze upon Antar's face. 'Tell me: do you think it's natural to want to turn the page, to be curious about what happened next'?
>
> 'Well', said Antar, uncomfortably, 'I'm not sure if I know what you mean.'
>
> 'Let me put it like that then', said Murugan. 'Do you think that everything that can be known, should be known?'
>
> 'Of course', said Antar. 'I don't see why not'.

> 'All right', said Murugan, dipping his spoon in his bowl. 'I'll turn a few pages for you; but remember, it was you who asked. It's your funeral.'
>
> (*CC*, 50)

'Curiosity killed the cat' says the proverb, and Murugan's sinister warning emphasises the gloomy intricacies of the story. We are reminded that different cultural forces and forms of knowledge are at work in this novel: scientific research, information technology, medicine, religious traditions, but also philosophy, theosophy and existentialism as well as history and anthropology. Such encyclopaedic display of knowledge seems to characterise the pathways that the characters decide to take. Their quest is either inclined to the logical-scientific type of speculation or close to philosophical or religious belief, and in this binary structure the former depends intimately on the construction and accumulation of knowledge through experiments over time (*chronos*), whilst the latter prescribes a turning point in time, a kind of epiphany (*kairos*)disclosing truth and explaining reality in the attempt to give meaning to human experience.

The sense of mystery, of times evolving into extraordinary circumstances, of lives multiplied and reflected through the mosaic of history, represents a constant preoccupation in Ghosh's cinematic techniques, and can be exemplified by the following quotation:

> He [Murugan] patted Antar on the shoulder. […] 'And isn't that the scariest thing there is Ant? To hear something said, and not to know who's saying it? Not to know who's speaking? For if you don't know who's saying something, you don't know why they're saying it either'.
>
> (*CC*, 91)

Here, narrative voices overlap and disturbingly the reader is metatextually challenged, led astray by the dichotomy of presence and absence besetting modern life. In its vacuum of authoriality, the novel extends its ramifications and casts doubts upon the reliability of narrators caught between the heavy sense of waiting and the expectation of outcomes, as if to assert the impossibility of linear storytelling.

The tense dialogic confrontation between Antar and Murugan is grounded upon the search for meaning or, in other terms, the way to follow in order to reach or construct knowledge, a paramount theme in this intricate textual labyrinth. Antar is unable to comprehend and accept the hypotheses and revelations of Murugan concerning the real goals of the scientific operation to discover the malaria virus, carried out during the Raj by Ronald Ross. Being pushed to the limits of understanding, he is challenged by the apparently impenetrable burden of knowledge,

imagined as a tool designed not only to classify the world, but also to change the articulations of life. Such intense philosophical debate lies at the very heart of the following excerpt, which is worth quoting at length:

> 'I'm listening', said Antar. 'For what it's worth.'
>
> 'Maybe none of this makes sense', said Murugan. 'But let's just try and take it on its own terms for a minute. Let's look at the kinds of working hypotheses it yields. Here's one: if it's true that to know something is to change it, then it follows that one way of changing something – of effecting a mutation, let's say – is to attempt to know it, or aspects of it. Right?'
>
> (*CC*, 88)

Murugan refers to the idea of knowledge in its high meaning, that is, not only as a coherent and cohesive body of disciplines but rather as a primary interpretative instrument, one which bestows power and relevance, whose strength is born out of accumulation and stratification. In order to skim its gist, we need to undercover and extract its fundamental constituents, and this deconstructionist shift may remind us of an operation of archaeology. We could therefore think of Foucault and his analysis of knowledge within the field of archaeology, whose strategic act of collocation and interpretation is purposeful since "it is not in order to give it a definitive place in an unmoving constellation, but in order to reveal, with the archive, the discursive formations, the positivities, the statements, and their conditions of formation, a specific domain"[3].

In his mesmerising style, Murugan subtly hints at the supremacy of knowledge, although his position is certainly characterised by the token of ambiguity, so that Antar, and implicitly the reader, have to infer and speculate. As some scholars have argued, this is an example of silent knowledge, a conceit that upturns its own definition by foregrounding the authority of silence and lack of availability of knowledge. Indeed, the mysterious scientific research apparently aimed at the malaria project headed by Ronald Ross hides a cloudy conspiracy penetrating the uncanny secrets of immortality. Within this malicious plan, which seems to be drawn on espionage fiction or vintage graphic literature, it is imperative not to spread knowledge and reveal findings, but rather to withhold signals or provide false clues. Adopting this vision, Tapan K. Ghosh discusses the speculative attitude of the novelist in terms of binary opposition: "Amitav Ghosh holds that science not only reveals reality but also, at times, creates it. What is known is knowledge. At the other end of this scientific knowledge lies the unknown, the unarticulated truth"[4]. Yet, the author is even subtler, and this opposition ought to be located within a larger cultural arena of confrontation, in which monolithic assertions are placed along a continuum that interferes with

[3] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London, Routledge, 2002 (1969), pp. 228-9
[4] Tapan K. Ghosh, "A Quest for Immortality in The Calcutta *Chromosome*", in R. K. Dhawan, cited, p. 252.

processes of mediation. The known and the unknown thus become two related categories that continuously influence each other and trespass their own boundaries according to the provocative style of postmodernist *bricolage*.

However, Ghosh seems to warn that in this scenario there is no clear-cut divide between knowledge and ignorance, as there is no strict conflict between *chronos* and *kairos*, primordial forces which invade each other's space by means of apparently dull coincidences. Probably such sense of displacement is derived from the catharsis of the contemporary over-connected world. In the novel, the rhizomatic chain of events and references appears to link the characters (and the readers) *ad infinitum* not so much through narrative digressions but rather by activating intertextual structures, from mundane episodes in a frozen present to a sleepy future, and then back again towards a crystallised Victorian/Edwardian past. This multiple technique endorses the schizophrenic sense of modernity and postmodernity, so that all the protagonists of the novel are driven by an inner self-questioning about the meaning of their surroundings. Anthony Giddens in his discourse on modernity, in which he emphasises the character of impelling globalisation as a regulating principle of contemporaneousness, holds that "many of the phenomena often labelled as post-modern actually concern the experience of living in a world in which presence and absence mingle in historically novel days"[5] and in *The Calcutta Chromosome* it is exactly the double dimension of presence and absence – or the known/unknown, or *chronos*/*kairos*, and other oppositions as well – that ritualises the cycles of existence.

Furthermore, we may tackle the sphere of knowledge from another viewpoint. In an era obsessed with technological developments like ours, the notion of knowledge and the act of passing it on constitute two orienting points, and Ghosh appropriates this intense preoccupation of the contemporary world to speculate about the nervous condition of culture. He craftily anticipates the Internet revolution by creating Ava, a futuristic machine that textually works as an active character within the story structure. However, in spite of its hyperbolic powers and access to worldwide databanks – becoming almost a sacrilegious substitute for a modern deity - Ava cannot solve all the mysteries that cluster around the figure of Ronald Ross, and therefore there are limits that seem to slow the progress of man and his thirst for knowledge. Computers and other types of technological devices, seen as postmodern repositories of information, knowledge and culture, appear in the open spaces of science fiction but also stand as metaphors of the mind, personified intersections of body and mind, software and hardware. This new mitopoetic attitude emerges in Hari Kunzru's *Transmission* (2004), for instance, where the spread of a new and dangerous computer virus named after Bollywood star Leela Zahir is symptomatic of the deterioration of human relationships and cultural values. A perturbing nymph split between the zone of myth and the domain of Information Technology, Leela treacherously flirts with computers and people by multiplying her identity: not only a challenge for computer geeks, but also the reincarnation of a beautiful silver screen actress, the return of a mythical seductress who oscillates between the roles of a heavenly *apsara* or a threatening *nagini*: "The truth is that Leela was not one thing. She was not even a set or a group or a family. She was a swarm, a horde. [...] So many

[5] Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge, Polity, 1990, p. 177.

Leelas. So many girls with the same face. The glory of all these variants, the glamour that caught so many people unawares, lay in their power of metamorphosis"[6].

With Ghosh's writing we are not shown a similar polysemantic development of the hybrid blend of lore and science, but certainly the fruitful alliance of postmodernism and science fiction affects all the narrative levels. Ava herself builds up bridges between cultures and traditions, but here oblique intertextual references are hidden in the text. Whilst the diaphanous image of the computer bug/beautiful woman zigzags in the text by Kunzru almost working as a figure of speech, or a postmodern simile, in Ghosh's novel it is the entire field of science, bacteriology in particular, that is being re-imagined or re-written on the palimpsest of fiction, so as to built up the apt context for a crescendo of tension and mystery tangled up with historical and narrative events. Such procedure of inventive mediation originates the astutely crafted title, which openly expresses its hypertrophic connections with different genres. Not only does it clearly introduce the atmosphere of a medical thriller within a colonial - or postcolonial - perspective, but it further extends its thematic implications by hinting at the discourse of bioculture in the form of narrative mystery akin to the science fiction motifs of catastrophic pestilence and human destruction.

To sum up such articulated issues, Ghosh's bracing narrative generates human labyrinths, viruses and flesh, chromosomes and bodies constructed as self-contained structures and interstices. Bodies, in particular, in their various conditions – hit by diseases (malaria, syphilis), treated in laboratories, substituted by 'intelligent' computers or evoked as ghosts through the aide of séances – represent multilayered, changeable agencies at work in a Fate-governed world. The multitude of their actions, efforts, and feelings are paralleled by the unravelling of stories. With this baffling implication, the author again turns to the nodes of storytelling, in *equilibrium* between human experience and textual creativity so as to question the intricacies of life and its quest for meanings, split between the influence of *chronos* and *kairos*:

> 'It's strange', said Urmila. 'Just the other day, I was reading a book of Phulboni's essays – you know, the writer who was given the award at Rabindra Sadan yesterday? What you were saying reminded me of something he wrote a long time ago. I remember the passage almost by heart. "I have never known", it begins, "whether life lies in words or in images, in speech or sight. Does a story come to be in the words that I conjure out of my mind or does it live already, somewhere, enshrined in mud and clay – in an image, that is in the crafted mimicry of life?"' (*CC*, 188-98)

[6] Hari Kunzru, *Transmission*, London, Penguin Books, 2005 (2004), p. 108.

Chapter X

Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar The Clown*: A Trilogy of Innocence, Betrayal and New Beginning

G.A. Ghanshyam

Postcolonialism or Postmodernism is the term of reference that has been used to describe and dissect critically the New Literatures of the world. Postcolonialism is but a legacy of our colonial past, a legacy of the subjugation and dominance of the colonized by the colonizer that gave way to de-colonisation after the Second World War. The term 'postcolonialism' is subject to various connotations, however to understand the concept in terms of literary practice it can be referred to as, "… different forms of representations, reading practices and values." (Rai, 2005:1).

Postmodernism is a concept that can be referred to as the direct outcome of this modern Postcolonial world, a world that has been witness to mass migration, cross-cultural encounter and the amalgamation of various cultures into a hybrid multicultural society. This has resulted as Rushdie says in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, "That most profound of our needs, to our need for flowing together, for putting an end to frontiers, for the dropping of the boundaries of the self." (Rushdie, 2006:433).

This postcolonial, postmodern world is one where myriad worlds and experiences flow, seeping into each other as there are no boundaries or barriers anymore. Today the world is a globalised world where borders have ceased to exist. All concepts of conventionality and rules are broken, and new ones created to give expression to this new phenomenon of rule breaking and free world. Art and literature of this modern world also reflects this trend as is evident in the fiction of Salman Rushdie.

Salman Rushdie is an eminent postmodernist. A pioneer in the field of Indian English Diasporic Literature, Rushdie accurately portrays the complex and confusing postcolonial, postmodern world. All his novels represent his interpretation of history and the world, and their influence on life and society.

A postmodern novelist that he is, Rushdie reflects the rebellion from conventionality. Like the works of most postmodern writers, his fiction too has a touch of unreality and vastness that is needed to project contemporary reality, a reality devoid of borders.

In his latest novel, *Shalimar the Clown* (Rushdie, 2005), he voices this concept of a borderless world and its implications:

> Everywhere was now a part of everywhere else. Russia, America, London, Kashmir. Our lives, our stories, flowed into one another's, were no longer our own, individual, discrete. This unsettled people. There were collisions and explosions. The world was no longer calm. (37)

So, even the idyllic setting of a small remote village of Kashmir is not immune to this effect of different worlds colliding, exploding and unsettling its social and cultural fabric, its identity as well as the identity of its people.

The novel is an ode to the simple, idyllic life of the valley, the land of Rushdie's roots, a land of eternal beauty and charm, that, "… as lost…like paradise, …Kashmir, in a time before memory." (4). Portrayed as the ideal world with its unique way of life, its 'Kashmiriyat', where differences and divisions were non-existent; a world untouched by hatred and communalism.

Peace, love and brotherhood characterize the Kashmiri way of life. It is a life and world of innocence that is betrayed by its own people, and slowly walks down the path to destruction as embodied in the life of Shalimar, the protagonist and his village, Pachigam. Not only Shalimar, but also the other main characters of the novel are highly symbolical, for Rushdie believes that history and the individual, "… interpenetrate and that is how the writer needs to examine them, the one in the context of the other." (Rushdie, 1984:57).

Pachigam, a small village in Kashmir situated in the serene surroundings besides the river Muskadoon, is a quiet, peaceful village. Happy and content, the people in the village live their lives in blissful oblivion only to wakeup to the harsh realities of life when insurgency first reared its ugly head in the valley in the form of Kabalis from Pakistan. The seed of distrust and hatred sown by the fundamentalists and extremists, the by-products of a savage and cruel dissection of the nation, gradually takes enormous forms and engulfs the whole valley in its fire. Partition of the nation did not only carve out two nations out of one but it also created a sharp division between two communities. Geographical as well as psychological partition took place, the echo of which still reverberates in the minds and hearts of two nations, two communities and people.

Through the novel, Rushdie expresses "…sadness for the ideal that has been lost in Kashmir and in so many parts of the Muslim world, the ideal of tolerance and secular pluralism." (Cowley, 2005:27). The drastic transition from innocence to betrayal has been represented by the author through the character of Shalimar, the clown. Son of the village headman, Shalimar is a sweet innocent boy, "clown prince of the performing troupe" (50); a young boy madly in love with Pandit Kaul's daughter, Bhoomi or Boonyi as she prefers to be called.

Shalimar and Boonyi's love blooms in the beautiful and pristine environs of the Kashmir valley hidden from the eyes of their elders. When people find out, they uphold the values of 'Kahmiriyat' and bless the young couple. But Boonyi is far from happy. Claustrophobia grips her, and she realizes rather too late that she wants to escape. "She knew then that she would do anything to get out of Pachigam…" (114). The free unbridled spirit inherited from her mother coupled with her youthfulness ill-marks the love story of Shalimar and Boonyi, giving it a tragic turn.

Increasing influence of alien presence on the Kashmiri landscape slowly starts corroding and degrading the values of the valley, the 'Kashmiriyat'. This influence can be seen in the radical preachings of Bulbul Fakh, the 'iron mullah', and in the arrival of Maximilian Ophuls on the scene, the representative American presence in the valley. And thus unfolds the tragic event of the tale:

> … the story of Max and Boonyi's doomed relationship [which] can be read as a study in human vanity, selfishness and aggressive mutual need, but also as a parable of the carelessness of American intervention on the subcontinent. Beware the return of the repressed, he [Rushdie] seems to be saying, in often unexpected and violent forms. (Cowley, 2005:27)

Mesmerized by Boonyi's beauty, Max arranges for Boonyi and her friends to give a dance performance in Delhi. The performance is only a pretext for Ophuls to get close to Boonyi. Boonyi had been waiting for this opportunity only. Her father used to say, "The dance of the shadow planets is the dance of the struggle within us, the inner struggle of moral and social choice." (48). And Boonyi chooses to transgress the moral and social code, opting to go, "… in search of a future and though she had thought of it as an opening it had been a closing, …" (367).

Boonyi enters into a relationship with Max in the hope of a better life. As for her heart, she feels that she was, "… tearing it out and breaking it into little bits and throwing it away …" (194). Though she thought that by her action she had gained release from the village existence that she so detested, yet the stirrings of her heart never let her escape the Kashmir embedded in her very being, her soul. She could not tear out memories of her valley, and her husband who still loved her. As is customary with such superficial relationships, the attraction started waning. Boonyi became increasingly alienated and depressed in her "liberated captivity" (201), finding solace in drugs and food.

Her desire to excel herself was but a fantasy lived in the shadow of the glamour and glitter of elite society, which was bound to shatter hopelessly one day. Boonyi was but a simple, naive village girl with big dreams in her eyes that were terribly misdirected. The path she chose for herself, sooner or later, had to lead only to one destination, and that was imminent disaster for its traveller. Like Ila of *The Shadow Lines*, a novel by Amitav Ghosh, Boonyi, "… desires freedom from a middle class [rustic] orthodoxy, but she discovers that the free world she had tried to build for herself was not free from the squalor of betrayal."(James: 155). Boonyi's disastrous flirtation with desire led to an avalanche of catastrophe not only in her life but also in the lives of the people related to her. She loses her identity and tumbles down the path of complete psychotic degeneration, waiting alone in the wilderness for death to truly free her.

Freedom was what Boonyi desired, "But free isn't free of charge" (253). The freedom that she chooses for herself is 'false freedom', an illusion, a bait to tempt her to sin, which she, "… like Eve, is easily tempted and eagerly accepts the Ambassador's offer of a change …" (Mathur, 2007:92). In the character of Boonyi we find the eagerness for liberation, lured by which she, symbolizing Kashmir, loses herself courting ruination as a result.

The innocence of life in the valley gradually transgresses the boundaries of that innocence and simplicity in the name of false hopes and dreams, and is ultimately betrayed in the process. Betrayal leads to a loss, a loss of identity and hopes, leading to a metamorphosis of life and characters. "Self-creation in times of conflict, one of Rushdie's themes …" (Roth, 2005:19) is represented through all the main characters who undergo and grow as per the changes in circumstances. No doubt,

"Metamorphosis was the secret heart of life" (56), but the metamorphosis that occurs in the novel almost but extinguishes the very life, giving place to death instead.

Shalimar, Boonyi's husband, represents this metamorphosis from innocence to betrayal in his transformation from an innocent village boy, an artist, into a hardcore killing machine.

> He was as dynamically physical a comedian as ever, but there was a new ferocity in him that could easily frighten people instead of making them laugh. (231).

Leaving his life and family, Shalimar joins the extremists pretending to believe in their cause, but all the while preparing himself for the ultimate aim of his life, to kill Maximilian Ophuls. Listening to the Iron Mullah, he realizes that:

> By crossing the mountains they had passed through a curtain and stood now on the threshold of the world of truth, which was invisible to most men. (266).

The 'curtain' is an important symbol that hides as well as separates. A similar curtain or 'membrane' is the dividing factor present in Rushdie's other novel *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, through which Ormus crosses over to emerge into an alien land and culture. A symbol often used as a metaphor for 'Transculturalism', it is a boundary that separates two worlds or cultures; and here the curtain separates the innocent, beautiful, multicultural and hybrid world of old Kashmir from the violent, betrayed and divided world of the new terror-stricken Kashmir. It divides the actual truth from the illusion of misguided ideology.

By crossing over to the other side, Shalimar takes his first step to avenge the betrayal of his wife. A true performer that he is, Shalimar very easily manages to assure his comrades of his affiliation to their ideology.

> Shalimar the clown rose to his feet and tore off his garments. "Take me!" he cried. "Truth, I am ready for you!" He was a trained performer, a leading actor in the leading bhand pather troupe in the valley, and so of course he could make his gestures more convincing, … (267-8)

Mindanao, a Filipino Muslim in the group however, sees through Shalimar's pretence when he says, "I see through you like window. You are not man of God." (269).

The fight for a religious cause just provides a platform for Shalimar to cross over to the other side, to reach his target in America and eliminate him. Like the crusades that were undertaken in by-gone times, the recent fight is also for power and possession. The author here tries to unearth the hypocrisy of war and bloodshed behind every fight, because violence begets violence. Life can be shaped out of love not violence, irrespective of any kind of faith or religious belief.

Here Rushdie is again reinstating the bare truth of modern life wherein it is the furies that are ruling men and life everywhere, and so he expresses, "An age of fury was dawning and only the enraged could shape it."(272). Today every nook and corner of the world is under the grip of the furies. Reasons may differ, but the reactions are

always one of rage and disaster, be it in Kashmir or in New York, for now, "Everyone's story was a part of everyone else's." (269).

So the story that began in a small remote village of Kashmir progresses to cross half the globe to reach to its climax in America. The American presence is the catalyst that escalates this dance of the furies across the globe. Max represents this presence for he is not only a goodwill Ambassador but also has a secret identity as well, of being involved in the exchange of weapons between America and extremist groups.

Shalimar is the resultant fury in this case. The degeneration of Boonyi from her pinnacle of beauty to a psychotic figure in the woods does not evoke any sympathy or cool down the embers of rage in Shalimar's heart. Knowledge of the Ambassador's secret dealings and his views on Kashmir fuels his rage further and gives new life to his ambition. After killing Boonyi ruthlessly in cold blood, he becomes free to pursue his final target.

The journey from innocence to betrayal reaches its final stages through the pathway of complete destruction. Pachigam ceases to exist. Charged with harbouring extremists, the village bears the full brunt of the atrocities of the armed forces. Everyone is killed, people and life is totally obliterated from the place where love had once bloomed and blossomed. "The village of Pachigam still existed on maps of Kashmir, but that day it ceased to exist anywhere else, except in memory." (309).

The furies thus, find a new home in the action of the armed forces meant for protection of people. Rushdie here indicates the pathetic situation of the people of Kashmir who have to bear the atrocities of both the terrorists as well as the forces. Life for them has left no option open for them to live in freedom and without fear:

> … undone by the twin forces of nationalism and religious fundamentalism. As usual in Rushdie's novels, these forces are not the enemies of enlightenment as much as they are the enemies of freedom, and that means they are the enemies of the natural. (Roth, 2005:19).

It is not only fundamentalism or extremism which proves to be detrimental for life and country; nationalism can also endanger life and freedom when taken in the stringent sense concerning itself only with selfish aim of possession and power. Bound in these twin chains, an individual loses all, identity, liberty and life. The furies unleashed by their combined powers creates only havoc and destruction wherever they exist. And these furies find another abode in the heart of India or Kashmira.

Shalimar after finally reaching America moves closer to his target by getting employed as Ophuls's driver. The knife in his hand that had long been thirsty for revenge ultimately finds its target when Shalimar kills Maximilian Ophuls at the doorstep of his daughter.

India is also Kashmira, the daughter of Boonyi and Max. Her existence gives a new twist to the revenge tale of Shalimar, for her presence makes his revenge incomplete, for early in the story Shalimar had vowed that if Boonyi ever betrayed him, he would not only kill her and her lover but also the child if any from the relationship. The death of her father leaves India shocked and furious:

> Blood called out for blood and she wanted the ancient Furies to descend shrieking from the sky and give her father's unquiet spirit peace. (331).

Chapter X

Like her mother who left home and family for the sake of a false and borrowed identity, India leaves for Kashmir in quest of her true identity. She returns not as India but as Kashmira:

> Kashmir lingered in her, however, and his arrest in America, his disappearance beneath the alien cadences of American speech, created turbulence in her that she did not at first identify as culture shock. She no longer saw this as an American story. It was a Kashmiri story. It was hers. (372).

To avenge the death of her mother and father, Kashmira targets Shalimar not with arrows or knives but with her letters that were her "arrows of hate" (374). She slowly kills Shalimar's ego, which is the real cause of her parents' death. Yet his hurt ego fails to find satisfaction in their death because his efforts to obliterate their presence are negated by Kashmira, a living reminder of both Boonyi and Max.

Hatred can never extinguish the Life Force. It lives on in the hearts of people, like it does in Kashmira. Kashmira embodies the emergence of a new beginning from the chaos and turmoil of betrayal to the arrival of a bright new dawn, full of hope and regeneration. Her presence is an indication by the author that Kashmir will not be lost, it will emerge from the darkness into the light of true freedom and hope for all its people, a new life.

Kashmira symbolizes this new beginning in her realization and acceptance of her true identity, in her love for Yuvraj, and ultimately in her emerging victorious by executing the hatred and violence of Shalimar. She was no longer a prisoner of fury when she lets her arrow find its mark. "She was not fire but ice."(382). She had already killed Shalimar with the glimpse of truth, and the one she kills with her arrow at the end of the novel is but a shadow of that man.

"… grappling imaginatively with the shock of 9/11 and the wars that have followed." (Cowley, 2005:17), Rushdie has portrayed the recent tragic history of Kashmir with poignancy and sensitivity in the novel. In the story of his characters is intertwined the story of Kashmir, its life and culture, and the degeneration of this Paradise into Hell. Making the 'personal bleed into the political', Rushdie has once again voiced his concern for the modern world at large and Kashmir in particular, lamenting the loss of love, innocence and brotherhood. In fact, the novel:

> *Shalimar* looks to several beginnings: reflecting on what has been lost in Kashmir, it also looks forward to a time when the words Muslim and Hindu will once more be merely "descriptions" rather than "divisions." (Cowley, 2005:27).

The novel is not only an odyssey from innocence to betrayal but also an affirmation and belief in the resilience and strength of the human spirit, a belief in the future. Truly a trilogy of innocence, betrayal and new beginning, *Shalimar the Clown* is a story portraying the life cycle of death in life and life in death, a perpetual cycle of birth, destruction and regeneration.

It represents a new life, a new beginning with the dissolution of all divisions and segments. Now, "There was no India. There was only Kashmira, and Shalimar the clown." (398). The multicultural, hybrid world is welcomed on the horizon, that has no place for any kind of divisions or borders. All divisions dissolve and disintegrate paving the way for the reign of Humanism, for the victory of the essential Life Force present in all of us.

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Chapter XI

Nationalism in Transnational Space: A Saga of Conflict in *The inheritance of Loss*.

Nibedita Mukherjee

Under impact of the modern phenomenon of economic liberalization and globalization, the world has been transformed into a global village where men of different nationalities co-exist. They occupy a heterogeneous space where the varied religions and cultures of the world intermingle. In this world of transnationalism "citizenship" happens to be the "mantra" of the day. Rainer Bauback in *Transnational Citizenship* attempts a definition of the term as "legal relation between states and individuals, but in its comprehensive sense it signifies membership in a self – governing community"(5). But can the demands of globalization really break through the centuries old myth of nationalism? Can really the concept of citizenship yoke together men of opposed nationalities who have been nurtured on the staple of hatred?

Leela Gandhi opines that "nationalism" has been an important aspect of decolonization struggles in the third world. Drawing upon the works of legends such as Edward Said, Benedict Anderson, David Lloyd etc. she has argued the "question of nationalism" and its various aspects and impact. Anderson considered nationalism to be the "most universally legitimate value" in the present political scenario (3). However, this also raised the question of "separatist" appeals for nationhood which often results in insurgencies and disturbances which jeopardize the position of the nation-State. David Lloyd in his essay, "Nationalism Against the State", therefore, distinguishes between the "legitimate" and "illegitimate" forms of nationalism and argues that the western stand of anti-nationalism was actually a reaction against the nationalism of the third world which was considered to be a galvanizing force towards decolonization.

Hegel in "Lectures on the Philosophy of World History" had argued in favour of the nation-State which he considered to be the proper end of the overlapping narratives of "Reason", "Modernity"and "History". In later years this concept had furnished the ideology of nation-ness, and yet, it fails to explain the post-Hegelian movement of "new" nationalism which leads to "pre-modern" or, as Lloyd argues, atavistic sentiments.

Tom Nairn in *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-nationalism*, has attempted to present an in-depth study of nationalism in both "good" and "bad" aspects. He interprets nationalism as a yearning or a nostalgic desire to look back with an intention of balancing the burden of "progress" for "as human kind is forced through its strait doorway, it must look desperately back into the past, to gather strength wherever it can be found for," Nairn feels, " the ordeal of development" (348-349). But this invariably has led to "regressive" nationalism of the East and this is actually an attempt to keep away the forces of the modern world.

However, the liberal thinkers such as Todorov and Kristeva prefer to reflect upon the positive aspects of nationalism which, they feel, provide an education in good international manners. The "nationalism", in this avatar often leads to the concept of the "one world" or the utopian "vision of postnationalism". Todorov writes:

> From this viewpoint the history of humanity is confused with that of colonization – that is, with migrations and exchanges; the contemporary struggle for new markets, for supplies of raw materials is only the end result rendered harmless owing to its origins in nature of the first step that led the human being to cross the threshold. (257).

But migration or exchanges has not been able to provide a homogenous space for often the "political subjects of decolonization" is engendered by the encounter between two conflicting systems and values. Thus, as Bhabha opines, "a third space" of communication is created and it is called a "place of hybridity" where anti-colonial politics first begins to articulate its agenda. The result is the phenomenon of "in-between-ness" which is caused by the "specific trauma of displacement". This results in a sense of "un-homeliness", thus creating a restless (dis)continuity. Since the time of the Jewish dispersion upto the present age of migration of Africans and Indians for economic reasons – diaspora has resulted in the loss of homely space. This often leads to dissatisfaction, disharmony and often a bristling anger within the individual against the "nation-State" where he is being subjected to such cultural opposition. So, viewed from this light, postnational/postcolonial "one world" continues to be a Utopian dream. Though economic and other multifaceted needs cause men to leave their own cultural nation-State and occupy a heterogeneous space(accept a new citizenship), yet it cannot rob them of their spirit of nationalism which manifests itself in varied forms, "good" and "bad". The aim of the present paper is to make an in depth-study of Kiran Desai's novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, in the light of the postcolonial concept of nationalism in this era of intense globalization and economic liberalization.

Kiran Desai, like her mother Anita Desai, is obsessed with "journeys" in multiple forms. Since mythical times "journey" has served as the *leit-motif* of varied kinds of literature, *i.e* the pagan myth of Ceres's journey in search of Percephane, Orpheus's in search of Eurydice, Aeneas's journey to Pluto's kingdom in search of wisdom, as also the post-lapserian journey of Adam and Eve. But the result of the quest is always the same – it leads to self-enlightenment. In the 2006 Booker Prize winning novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, Kiran Desai writes about the journeys undertaken by the various characters of the novel, i.e the Judge, Gyan and Biju. Their journeys cause them to leave their nation-State and inhabit in foreign land, often in the land of their colonial masters. But this cannot rob them of their nationalism – rather it stays within their soul and manifests itself in varied forms.

The novel begins at ChoOyu, a tiny hamlet in the north-eastern region of the Himalayas. It is centred around a retired judge of the Supreme Court, Jemubhai Popatlal Patel and his orphaned grand-daughter Sai, their cook, whose son Biju was an illegal immigrant in the U.S and Gyan, the Gorkha tutor to Sai. All these men – the Judge, Biju and Gyan – attempt to be established through the process of migration and suffer the varied aspects of "unhomeliness" and ultimately embark upon a voyage in search of "homely space".

Chapter XI

The theme of an Indo-Nepali insurgency is worked into the fabric of the text right at the onset when the hunting rifles of the judge – a BSA five shot barren pump gun, a .30 Spring-field rifle and a double barreled rifle, Holland and Holland – were stolen by some boys (aged below twenty) who claimed to be fighting for the cause of Gorkhaland. It marked the beginning of a new agitation:

> There was report of new dissatisfaction in the hills, gathering insurgency, men and guns. It was the Indian-Nepalese this time, fed up with being treated like the minority in a place where they were the majority. They wanted their own country, or at least their own state, in which to manage their own affairs. Here, where India blurred into Bhutan and Sikkim, and the army did pull ups and fush-ups, maintaining their tanks with khaki paint in case the Chinese grew hungry for more territory than Tibet, it had always been a messy map. The papers sounded resigned. A great mount of warring, betraying, bartering had occurred; between Nepal, England, Tibet, India, Sikkim, Bhutan; Darjeeling stolen from here, Kalimpong plucked from there – despite, ah, despite the mist charging down like a dragon, dissolving, undoing, making ridiculous the drawing of borders (9).

Thus, the north-eastern Himalayas had for long represented transnational space. The "Gorkhas" or "Gurkhas" had for long been worked into the fabric of the mountain life with the Kanchas and Kanchis forming an inseparable part of every mountain home. Yet, they had been long neglected and had always remained at the periphery of society, there were of course "some newly retired ones coming in from Hong Kong, but otherwise they are only Sherpas, coolies"(247).

This age-old neglect had slept dormant in their heart and under impact of slight disturbances had erupted into a destructive insurgency. The result was disruption of normal life and destruction at large:

> A series of stripes kept business closed.
>
> A one-day strike.
>
> A three-day strike.
>
> Then a seven day.
>
> .....
>
> A thirty-day strike.
>
> A twenty-one day strike
>
> More strike than no-strike (235).

This obviously reflects the "regresssive" nationalism of the East. The evil impact of such a mis-led concept is reflected in the journey of Gyan, the Nepali tutor to Sai. Sai had been removed from St.Augustine Convent when her parents expired in an accident at Moscow and was sent to her maternal grandfather, the retired judge, Mr.J.P.Patel. the Judge's finances were on the decline and he could not afford to send

Sai to a convent school. So it was decided that she would be taught by Nona, the unmarried sister of Lola Banerjee who dwell at MonAmi. But by the time Sai turned sixteen Nona had exhausted her knowledge of Physics and Mathematics. Thus Gyan, the Job-less graduate from Kalimpong Collage, entered the life of Sai.

There developed an instant attraction between Gyan and the secluded Sai. They drifted into each other's company and grew almost oblivious of the world around them:

> So they played the game of courtship, reaching, retreating, teasing, fleeing how delicious the pretense of objective study, miraculous how it could eat up the hours. But as they eliminated the easily revealable and exhausted property, the unexamined portions of their anatomies exerted a more severely distilled potential, and once again the situation was driven to the same desparate pitch of days when they sat forcing geometry.
>
> Up the bones of the spine.
>
> Stomach and belly button – (125).

But the Gorkha insurgency had an immense impact upon these long-neglected youth who felt their manliness roused by this call for the motherland. Gyan incidentally joined a march and as he floated through the market, "had a feeling of history being wrought, its wheels churning under him … [and]… he shouted along with the crowd, and the very mingling of his voice with largeness and lustiness seemed to create a relevancy, an affirmation he'd never felt before, and he was pulled back into the making of history" (157).

This heady sense of nationalism transformed Gyan. He started joining marches and blockades and even supplied the information about the hunting rifles of Sai's grandfather. He began to consider his previous attraction for Sai to be a mere feminine indulgence and broke off all such relation. But by nature Gyan was a mild youth and this spirit of aggressive nationalism also did not take much time to blow off. He felt the "patriotism was false" , "it was surely just frustration [with] the leaders harnessing the natural irritation and disdain of adolescence for cynical ends, for their own hope in attaining the same power as government officials held now, the same ability to award local business deals in exchange for bribes, for the ability to give jobs to their relatives, places to their children in school, cooking gas connections…"(157).

Thus Gyan's epiphanic realization relieved him of the man-created burden of nationalism and (with the help of his grandmother) he turned back to his early life – happy though dissatisfied. But such insurgency within the nation-State reflects other evils too, and Kiran Desai draws the attention to such evils through the episode of inhuman eviction of Father Booty. He was a Swiss national who had come to the hilly Teesta-land some forty-five years ago and had decided to live there for life. He had opened a Swiss style dairy and the entire area was indebted to him for his cheese, curd and chocolate cigars. The demand for Gorkhaland threw the entire locality into suspicion and it was found that Father Booty "was residing in India illegally [for] he had not expected contact with the authorities; he had allowed his residence permit to lapse in the back of a moldy drawer for to renew the permit was such bureaucratic hell, and never again did he plan to leave or reenter India … He knew he was a

foreigner but had lost the notion that he was anything but an *Indian* foreigner …" (220).

So Father Booty was discovered to be an illegal immigrant and was ordered to leave Kalimpong within two weeks. He went running to everyone who might help him – the police chief and SDO, Major Alloo and the forest department officials "But now, all those who in peaceful times had enjoyed his company and chatted about such things as curd, mushrooms and bamboo were too busy or too scared to help" (221). He was declared to be a threat to the national security and his fate was decided by men who had once been his friends. He left because:

> [he] had been forced onto a jeep leaving for the Siliguru airport, having lost everything but his memories: the time he had given a lecture on how dairies might create a mini Swiss – style economy in Kalimpong and had been greeted with a standing ovation; his poem on a cow in the *Illustrated Weekly*; and "Nothing so sweet, dear friends" – evenings on Uncle Potty's veranda, when the music ended on a drawn-out note of honey, and the moon – it was whole – sailed upwards, an alchemist's marvel of illuminated cheese. How fast the earth spun! It was all over (257-258).

So, Father Booty was exited to a life of boredom and "unhomely" space in his own homeland. He had adopted India to be his nation and had to leave it for a misled nationalistic cause.

The Judge's own journey through life, from one nation to another, from adolescence to manhood, narrates its own secret tale of hatred. He, Jemubhai Popotlal Patel, had been born to the family of peasants on the outskirts of the small town of Piphit. However, he was a boy of exceptional intelligence and his father had big dreams for him. Both father and son felt Jemubhai had the capability of clearing the ICS, provided they could procure the passage money to England. The money was obtained as dowry for marrying the daughter of Bomanbhai Patel, a rich businessman.

Thus Jemubhai landed in the land of the white colonial masters. He was filled with an inert sense of inferiority and to camoufledge it he adapted a veneer of indifference. A brown man in the nation-State of the white – his sense of nationalism, his Indianness suffered immensely. He even became scared of the English children, human beings half his size. They were always there, " taunting him in the street, throwing stones, jeering, making monkey faces" (209).

The future judge's irritation grew at his own incapability; he saw atrocities all round him but never once had the courage to stand up. There was one incident in particular:

> Another Indian, a boy he didn't know, but no doubt someone just like himself, just like Bose, was being kicked and beaten behind the pub at the corner. One of the boy's attackers had unzipped his pants and was pissing on him, surrounded by a crowd of jeering red-faced men. And the future judge, walking by, on his way home with a pork pie for his dinner – what had he done? He hadn't said anything. He hadn't called for help. He'd turned and fled, run upto his rented room and sat there (209).

By the time Jemubhai boarded his ship for a homeward voyage – a triumphant ICS – his sense of nationalism had been badly bruised. He was so ashamed of his Indianness that he relegated his national identity altogether and adapted the role of a pseudo-Englishman:

> Thus it was that the judge eventually took revenge on his early confusions, his embarrassments gloved in something called "keeping up standards", his accent behind a mask of quiet. He found he began to be mistaken for something he wasn't – a man of dignity. This accidental poise became more important than any other thing. He envied the English. He loathed Indians. He worked at being English with the passion of hatred and for what he would become, he would be despised by absolutely everyone, English and Indians both (119).

The Judge thus continued his journey of hatred through life - hating his wife, his family, his daughter – and it was finally his grand-daughter and his pet dog Mutt who restored his faith in life and love. Once again he became an Indian in spirit, praying desperately to God for the wellbeing of his dear ones.

Kiran Desai goes further and highlights the cause of nationalism within the Diaspora through Biju, the son of the cook at ChoOyu who was an illegal immigrant in the U.S. The West was considered to be a land of plenty, a Utopia by the impoverished easterners. The parents in the East were always advising their children in this regard:

> Better leave sooner rather than later … India is a sinking ship. Don't want to be pushy, darling, sweetie, thinking of your happiness only, but the doors wont stay open forever … (47).

Similarly advised, Biju competed with thousands to obtain a tourist visa to the U.S and thus "the luckiest boy in the whole wide world" appeared in the nation-State of the white men. But Biju had carried with him "the habit of hate" and "he found that he possessed an awe of white people, who arguably had done India great harm"(77) and it was similar to paying them back in their own coin. The white colonized had done much harm to India and thus a sense of bristling nationalism made one feel, "your father came to *my* country and took *my* bread and now I have come to *your* country to get *my* bread back" (135).

Though the character of Biju and his escapades, Kiran Desai introduces the readers to the actual America seen by the immigrants. "It was horrible what happened to Indians abroad and nobody knew but other Indians abroad. It was a dirty little rodent secret" (138). As Biju traversed the underworld of one restaurant to the other – from *Baby Bistro* to Le Colonial to Stars and Stripes Diner – he underwent a series of cultural, economic and religious shocks. The fast life of America, the night life in company of the Hubsis shocked the naïve Biju; he was angered by the habit of underpaying the illegal immigrants. All over the U.S it was beef, beef and only beef, and Biju's religiosity was deeply shaken, he fluctuated between the concept of the "holy cow" and the "unholy cow". Thus, far away from his homeland, Biju yearned for "homely space" He was deeply roused by a nostalgic desire for the past and he reminisced:

Chapter XI

> How peaceful our village is. How good the *roti* tastes there! It is because the *atta* is ground by hand, not by machine … and because it is made on a *choolah*, better than anything cooked on a gas or a kerosene stove … Fresh *roti,* fresh butter, fresh milk still warm from the buffalo … (103).

This nostalgic longing for a fragrance of his country led Biju to the Gandhi Café. He strictly believed that "One should not give up his religion, the principles of one's parents and their parents before them. No, no matter what"(136). So, Biju took up an extremely low-paying job under Harish-Harry, the "in-between" or fusion proprietor of the Indian food joint. Harish-Harry was full of contradiction – he loved the American dollar and the means of multiplying it, but he hated the way his daughter was forgetting her roots, her culture, her religion. Reflecting upon such "in-between" immigrants, Desai comments:

> It was't just Harish-Harry. Confusion was rampant among the "haaf 'n' haf" crowd, the Indian students coming in with American friends, one accent one side of the mouth, another the other side; mudding it up, wobbling them, downgrading sometimes all the way to Hindi to show one another. Who? No, no it was not they were pretending to be other than who and what they were (147-148).

Thus, Biju kept on working as an illegal immigrant, desiring to come back home, and yet, still persisting in search of the illusive green card. At this juncture he received news of the troubles back home and he felt that if he did not return he would never see his father again. His roots pulled with such immense strength that he bought a ticket back home – the cheapest ticket on the Gulf Air: New York – London – Frankfurt – Abu Dhabi – Dubai – Bahrain – Karachi – Delhi – Calcutta. Everyone around told him that he was a fool to return, that he was making a mistake, the biggest mistake of his life. But nobody realized that Biju was coming back to life – the real life of soil and earth, of *roti* and *dal*, of parents and relations. His American life had been a fake one, an imitation with a purpose and he could clown this duplicity no further. So, he ran across the globe to finally reach the sanctuary of his father's arms:

> At the gate, peeking through the black lace wrought iron, between the mossy cannonballs, was the figure in a nightgown.
>
> "*Pitaji*?" said the figure, all ruffles and colours.
>
> Kanchenjunga appeared above the parting clods, as it did only very early in the morning during this season.
>
> "Biju?" whispered the cook -
>
> "Biju!" he yelled, demented –
>
> Sai looked out and saw two figures lapping at each other as the gate swang open.
>
> The live peaks of Kanchenjunga turned golden with the kind of luminous light that made you feel, if briefly, that truth was apparent.

All you needed to do was to reach out and pluck it (324).

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Chapter XII

'Conflict' in Aravind Adiga's *Between the Assassinations*

Shaleen Kumar Singh

The much debatable term, 'conflict' (of Sociology), has now attained a peculiar currency in literary texts also. The authors are no alienable part of the poetry and social consciousness. The social consciousness governs his/her art, or in larger terms "on the forge of his own inner consciousness the writer takes the white-hot metal of reality and hammers it out, refashion it to his own purpose, beats it out madly by the violence of thought… ." (Fox 49). Each creative artist grapples with two forces; the one is 'inner' and the other is 'outer.' The 'inner self', according to Karl Marx, is determined by 'the outer' forces or the former is the ground where 'conflict' occurs and the latter is the source of his 'development' of thought and creativity, the whole procession of creation.

The post-colonial Indian English fiction offers a rich diversity of themes. The political overtone or political *conflict* has been the predominant theme of pre-independence literature while the post-independence fiction has used 'conflict' of human life at a larger level as the development of nation gave birth to many eccentricities, differences and violent activities and widened the gap between man and man economically and socially. Indian English fictionists like Aravind Adiga has minutely observed such abnormalities and with creative tool and expressed it in such a manner that the study of such conflicts (inner and outer) deserves serious critical notice. The purpose of this paper is to examine the myriad forms of 'conflict' in his second work of fiction *Between the Assassination* (The first *The White Tiger* being the winner of Booker Prize, 2008).

In the collection of short stories *Between the Assassinations* "Adiga tries his hand at the genre setting his stories in the city of Kittur on the Southwest coast of India. The titular assassinations refer to the 1984 death of Indira Gandhi and then the killing of her son Rajiv seven years later in 1991. While neither event has any direct bearing on the courses of action in this book, they are 'important events in the history of India', says Vikas Swarup.

Adiga has witnessed the everyday realities of villagers of Kittur, a town on the south-western coast in between Goa and Calicut. Kittur is the microcosm of India in which Adiga has tried to capture 'a wide social and economic spectrum', by relating stories in a 'short twisty description' of the town replete with anthropological details suggesting that 'something is profoundly wrong in India', and that everything is not as claimed by our politicians – 'India rising' or 'India shining.' These short stories are 'sharp', 'sardonic' and compelling and they have succeeded in peeling off the mask of 'pseudo-development' and exposing the real picture of India. Focusing his intention on the poor and the underprivileged, Adiga chiefly targets the conflict between the rich and the poor, the upper caste and the lower caste, the employers and the employees, and the powerful and the weak. In *Between the Assassinations*, Vikas Swarup rightly says:

> "… The characters are all conflicted and alienated in one way or another grappling with their inner demons, seething or scheming. In unsentimental, utilitarian prose, Adiga fleshes out their quirks and contradictions and maps their aspirations and anxieties". (Swarup)

The characters in this book are replete with startling inequalities of wealth and caste-system. Here *'we meet upper caste bankers and lower caste-rickshaw pullers, Muslim tea boys and Christian headmasters, capitalist factory owners and communist side kicks'*, as rightly stated by Vikas Swarup again. Adiga has concentrated on the various conflicts related to caste, class or wealth. He remains the champion of the poor and the destitute and a perfect expresser of their pains. Peter Parker correctly says:

> Adiga is at his best when describing the everyday realities of village people who escape to a big city, or are sent there by their families and end up living on the streets and doing the most menial jobs.

His characters exhibit 'The everyday frustration brought about by the discriminations of status, class and religion.' (Adams). In the book, there are a number of characters like Ziauddin, Ramakrishna, Shankara, Mr. Dimello, Rataakar Shetty, Keshva, Gururaj Kamath, Chenayya, Soumya and Raju, Jayamma, George D' Souza and Murli, who seem to be involved in their own tensions and conflicts of existence. In the first story, we see Ziauddin caught in the tension of Hindu-Muslim issue (communalism in milder vein) and poverty. In the second, we see Abbasi caught in the conflicts of corruption. Similarly, in the third, Ramakrishna has been arrested twenty-one times for the sale, at the discounted rates, of illegally photocopied or printed books on the granite pavement in front of Deshpremi Hemachandra Rao Park to the students of St. Alfonso College. (44).

In the next story, Shankara seems to have involved in caste conflict. As he is the mixed Brahmin-Hoyka student, he is presented by Adiga differently:

Shankara was always treated as someone special among his Hoyka relatives; because he was half Brahmin, and hence so much higher than them in the class seal. Swearing to himself, he kept going up the stairs. Didn't these Hoykas understand? There was nothing he hated more than their groveling to him, because of his half Brahmin. If they had been contemptuous of him, if they had forced him to crawl into their shops to expiate the sin of being a half-Brahamin, then wouldn't he have come to see them every day? (62).

Another story, in which the assistant headmaster Mr. D' Mello talks about the war of 1965 with Pakistan, tries to portray the perverted picture of the nation before the student:

> Ever since Sardar Patel died, this country has gone down the drain; he said, and the little boy nodded. 'We live in the midst of chaos and corruption; we can't fight it. We can only do our job, and go home. (103).

He goes on to say and again gives us a peep into the conflict occurring on the social platform.

> Once India had been ruled by three foreigners: England, France and Portugal, Bungling and Backstabbing. (104).

Gururaj is the honest journalist who always looks for truth but his 'chief' makes him aware of the bare realities of life that make them ignore the truth. The chief says to Gururaj:

> You write about it. You're only saying that the police force is rotten, but also that the judiciary is corrupt. The judge will call for contempt of court. You will be arrested even if what you are saying is true. You and I people in our press pretend that there is freedom of press in India but we know the truth. (128).

Gururaj suffers inner conflict as he understands the 'ways of the world' too late and his conflicting state of mind is portrayed by Adiga in a direct narration:

> The next morning, as he walked to the office, Gururaj thought: it is a false earth I am walking on. An innocent man is behind bars, and a guilty man walks free. Everyone knows that this is so and not one has the courage to change it. (129).

Adiga has a deep understanding of the dividing forces, languages and even castes which are responsible for endemic malpractices. While discussing about the language of Kittur, Adiga shows how different castes use different languages. Even the local paper *The Don Herald* is published in Kannada and it is the language of the upper caste. Adiga says:

> Although understood by virtually everyone in the town, Kannada is the mother tongue of only some of the Brahmins. Tulu, a regional language that has no written script – although is believed to have possessed a script century's ago – is the *lingua franca*. Two dialects of Tulu exist. The 'upper-caste' dialect is still used by a few Brahmins, but is dying out as the Tulu-speaking Brahmins switch to Kannada. The other dialect of Tulu, a rough, bawdy language cherished for its diversity and pungency of expletives, is used by the Bunts and Hoykas- this is the language of Kittur Street. (139).

The characters like Saumya and Raju the beggar children, are on a mission of smack for their father who is drug addicted; they seem to be absorbed in another conflict existence. Similarly, a woman (spinster) who is surrounded by yellow modes of DDT, takes enjoyment in deep breaths of DDT- a strange, relaxing, powerfully addictive aroma. The woman seems much influenced by casteism and sometimes she feels herself fortunate in remaining a spinster when she says:

> Sometimes I thank my stars I never married. What is I too had been deceived, like Ambika? Better a spinster than a widow, any day… And yet that little lower can't stop singing about it every minute of the morning. (176).

The character named George D' Souza is a 'bitter man' struggling to make the proper radius between mistress and servant is one day by his friend Guru who was a Hindu 'considered deaf by his friends'.

> You know what the biggest difference is, between being rich and being like us? The rich can make mistake again and again. We make only one mistake, and that's it for us. (186).

The above statement mirrors the conflict between the rich and the poor and airs out the feelings of the poor fellows. Ratnakar Shetty, a fake sexologist who is setting out to

find a cure of a young boy stricken with venereal disease, is involved in a conflict of rescuing a young boy, while Girdhar Rao and Kamini, the childless couple, seek refuge in his circle of intimates so that they may escape loneliness and avoid inner conflicts. The last story is about Murli, the communist who likes to write stories of the people who want nothing, and he suffers with several inner and outer conflicts.

Thus, from the above discussion it becomes clear that the theme of conflict remains alive in each and every story of Between The Assassinations, and 'this new work of fiction' covers a wider spectrum of Indian society. Ed King's observation deserves mention here:

> Adiga focuses on the effects of upheaval far from the centers of power, drawing his characters from across the social spectrum, from provincial factory owners to street sellers and beggar children. The stories come interspressed with excerpts from an imaginary travel guide to Kittur to confront a tourist vision of exotic India with the conflicts and injustices that this vision disavows.

The book has recorded many muffled voices of protest and has vocalized them creatively so that people of the entire world may know that 'all is not right in the world' and by projecting myriad pictures of society and people of India, Adiga displays his full-range imagination, impressive and genuine concern for the under-dog or the slum dog. The novel, therefore, is perfectly 'a Dickensian dark view of child labour, corruption, poverty and ruthless privilege in modern India'. (Langley).

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Chapter XIII

East-West Confrontation in Kamala Markandaya's *The Nowhere Man* (1972)

O.P. Dwivedi

East is East, West is West,

And ne'er the twain shall meet.

– Rudyard Kipling

In this postcolonial era, an unprecedented predicament resulting in confusion and conflict has plagued the masses across the globe and Kamala Markandaya is no exception to this. Markandaya, a pioneer of the Indian diaspora, put the Indian English literature on a global map. Her novels forcefully portray the people of the East and the West and the inevitable confrontation between them on issues of races, cultures and modes of living. Her mixed sensibility allows her to properly balance the Oriental and Occidental values of life. Dorien Mcdermott rightly points out:

> Markandaya has acquired a duality of vision, enabling her to observe both British and Indians with cool detachment… as she herself has said, in spite of being an outsider by choice, 'the eye I see with are still Indian eyes.[1]

And Balchandra Rajan also comments about her mixed sensibility – that "the presence of two cultures in one's mind forms a wider and therefore a saner basis on which to originate the quest for identity and that the discordance between these cultures can be creative as well as merely confusing"[2], but his phrase 'confusing' could not pervade Markandaya's imaginative fictional world. Here in this paper, we propose to deal with the East-West confrontation, arising from social and cultural considerations, in Markanadaya's novel, *The Nowhere Man*(1972).

The Nowhere Man brings to the fore the problem of transculturation and the violent relationship of the Orients with the Occidentals. The novel revolves round the central figure of Srinivas, who is suffering from a sense of alienation in life. Srinivas is a victim of British barbarism in India before he leaves for England along with his wife Vasantha. Srinivas starts an import-export business of spices in England, and is blessed with two sons – Sheshu and Laxman. The identity problems besiege the two

children as they advance in age. They have acquired the western ways of life and the disclosure of Laxman to marry an English girl Pat came as a shock to Srinivas and his wife. Immediately, Sheshu succumbs to his injuries in a war, fighting for England. Srinivas's colonial hangover gets a fresh jolt. Markanadaya foreshadows many diasporic concerns and also clears the presuppositions of the third-world people who are quite keen on entering into the first world., with aspirations for better wealth and prosperity, without realizing that the displacement to the first world demands greater adaptability, both in terms of culture and climate. There is a big vacuum or what Bhabha calls 'in-between space' between these two worlds which is very difficult to fill up. Markandaya warns the Indians by revealing to them poignancy of demonic humanistic values flooding the first world. Oscar Handlin expresses a similar view when he remarks as follows:

> The history of immigration is the history of alienation and its consequences.
>
> For every freedom won, a tradition lost. For every second generation assimilated,
>
> a first generation in one way or another spurned. For the gains of goods and
>
> service, an identity lost, and uncertainty found.[3]

Soon after, Srinivas's wife Vasantha succumbs to tuberculosis and dies, leaving him all alone. Thus, the dreams of Srinivas of living happily with his family in his 'House No. 5' end as frustrations. The immersion of his wife's ashes into the Thames turns out to be a horrendous experience for Srinivas. The policeman rebukes him for his misdeed – "if everyone carried on the same the river would soon be polluted; the river is not the place fro rubbish" (p.39).[4] Srinivas is left wondering how a flowing river could be polluted by the immersion of ashes. He wrongly identifies the Thames as a substitute for the Ganges, and the policeman's rebukes add insult to his injury.

Time and again, Srinivas suffers from nostalgia for his homeland that now exists only in his memory. But destiny has something else in store for Srinivas, as he is confronted with a divorcee English woman, Mrs. Pickering, who develops a liking for him. He accommodates Mrs. Pickering in his lonely 'House No. 5', and all of a sudden, gladly fixes his identity with England and takes pride in flaunting his new identity. He thinks: "I am becoming more of English than the English, … and felt almost as if he could enter their skins" (p.69). He does not even object to Mrs. Pickering's cooking meet in his house, even though the very smell of meat chokes him up. He also agrees with Mrs. Pickering idea of celebrating Christmas in his house, though once he had objected to Sunday being declared as an official holiday, since it had nothing to do the Indian culture. Markandaya displays how Srinivas surrenders himself to the will of Mrs. Pickering, a quality inherited by the Indians during the civilizing mission of the Whites.

Markandaya emplys the theme of acculturation and imaginative schizophrenia in the novel under review. She knows from her intimate experience the problems surrounding the diasporic Indians. She makes Srinivas adjust to the western ways of life, and he proudly utters aloud: 'This is my country now.' He is happy to swap his identity with the West, even if it proves to be short-lived. His identity is divided by

culture, history and the prevailing circumstances. Made up of Indian clay, he tries to put a layer of Englishness over it and thus tries to be become an appropriate Englishman.

Srinivas's father was also a victim of British rule in India. His father was a senior lecturer at a college under the British control, but isolation and racism infected his teaching career immensely, as he was never given company by any Englishmen outside the lecture-room. Unlike his white colleagues, he was not offered any invitation to the Principal's house. His teaching profession taught him the painful lessons of inferiority. To make matters worse, he was declined any promotion to higher posts – 'headmaster, principal and vice-chancellor' – which were offered, one after another, to the Englishmen. So, sheer frustration grips him hard and he becomes helpless. Ostensibly, the father of Srinivas is totally upset over the callous British treatment meted out to him.

The East-West confrontation hits the novel throughout. In the first part of the novel, this confrontation erupts from the cultural gap, but its victims are often Indians. As Thakur Guruprasad says, "*The Nowhere Man* is a remarkable work of fiction depicting the tragedy of bicultural living in all its harrowing aspects."[5] Colonial barbarism forms a spectre for Srinivas and his family right from his early days. As a young man, he witnesses the confrontation between the Whites and the Indians. A.V. Krishna Rao and Madhvi Menon call this confrontation "not a raucous, raging conflict but a seething and silent one that is eventually resolved by his own efforts."[6] As the violence in colonial India proliferates, and injustice becomes rife, the discontentment and frustration in Indian youth is activated. Srinivas rebels against the British raj and plunges into anti-government activities. He tries, as a rebel, to manufacture the petrol bombs with the help of Vasudeva. But this rebellious act hastens Srinivas's departure for England. The police raids Vasudeva's house, and being aware of the horrendous condition on getting held up, he locks himself up in a camphor wood and dies of asphyxiation. Vasantha also faces utter humiliation at the hands of policemen. All these racial incidents hasten his immigration to England. That is why M.P. Joseph calls this novel "a documentary on racial prejudice and its origin in colonialism."[7]

However, in the second part of the novel, economic crisis pervading England overtakes this cultural theme, as a result of the disintegration of the British empire caused by the war. Srinivas also suffers economic crisis in his business, deteriorating along with his age. At such a time of crisis, Srinivas's friend Abdul offers him a helping hand and urges him to associate himself in his business, but Srinivas does not accept it. Abdul briefs Srinivas about the England-India relations vehemently:

> Is there no such thing as history? Which tells you how, when they were the
>
> top dogs, we were the pariah dogs, only it doesn't spell it out specifically?...
>
> Took my land right under my nose, took my old man first so he wouldn't bleat,
>
> Took my pride so I never walked with my head up, took my freedom finally. (p.75)

The youths of England are hard-pressed with job-crisis, and to worsen the matter immigrants keep on flooding to compete with them in every field. Fred Fletcher and his

army of friends – Mike, Joe and Bill – also experience the same sort of job-crisis in their homeland. Such painful is the condition of Fred, an angry young man, that to secure a job for himself he shifts to Australia, where he works as 'a rod mender', but dissatisfied with that job he again turns back to England. He has the job-scarcity there too. He was a person who, finally switched over to a new place in order to secure a better future. His anger was fuelled by a disclosure from one of his mates that for their present pathetic conditions, "the blacks were responsible. They came in hordes, occupied all the houses, filled up the hospital beds and their offspring took all the places in schools." (p. 163). And immediately afterwards, Fred's encounter with the Orientals sparks. First, he tries to harass a black sweeper, telling him "You have got no right to be in the country. You bugger off see" (p. 164), to which the sweeper retorts: "I got my right when you lot carved my country" (p. 164). Unable to overcome that sweeper, in his next encounter, he throws a coloured youth into the gutter. Carrying on his act of humiliation, he also scolds Srinivas.

Now, Srinivas along with his the other black faces the wrath of Fred and his fellows. But Srinivas cannot rebel as it will hasten his departure from England and he has nowhere to go. Further, hostility does not have a rational basis:

> BLACKS GO HOME, they said, their fear and hate crystallized into words
>
> which opened whole new hells of corresponding fears and desolation in those
>
> at whom they were aimed. (p. 168).

Srinivas, in the meantime, is infected with leprosy, but it doesn't trouble him much. The only thing which bothers him is Fred's outrage against the immigrants settled in England. Fred dislikes the very colour of their skin:

> Fred looked up at him from where he lay. It seemed to him a harmless face, but
>
> the colour was wrong. He decided that he hated that colour, and the untold evils
>
> he and his kind were letting loose in his country. … (p.165)

The inextricable amount of hatred incites Fred to set Srinivas's house on fire, though Srinivas escapes unhurt. Ironically, Fred is burnt to death inside the very house he has set afire. Nemesis overtakes Fred, and in this game of racism the cause of Srinivas is vindicated.

Undoubtedly, *The Nowhere Man* is a novel of confrontation between the East and the West. It provides a microcosmic view of Indian culture and through the life story of Srinivas and his wife Vasantha (who adheres throughout her life to the 'Indian way of life', to her sari, religion, and rituals). Srinivas's double consciousness is at work in the later part of the novel. He has become an object of isolation, hatred and sometimes of compassion. The various racial violence pervading this novel results due to cultural differences. For this very reason, *The Nowhere Man* can be seen as a clash

of cultures, where one culture constantly tries to subvert the other, in order to prove its superiority.

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ABOUT THE BOOK

This is a collection of critical essays on Indian English Literature by diverse hands, with a special focus on the theme of conflict and development in it. It contains thirteen essays by as many scholars, and the scholars contributing to it are both Indian and Westerners. Indian authors like, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Amitav Ghosh, V.S. Naipaul, Manohar Malgonkar, Salman Rushdie, Jhumpa Lahiri, Girish Karnad, Aravind Adiga, Kiran Desai, Kamala Markanadaya, and their texts have been studied herein. This collection will, hopefully, prove useful to teachers and researchers and find a place on the shelves of the libraries the world over.

About the *Conflict and Development* Series

Otto F. von Feigenblatt, Series Editor

The Conflict and Development Series is published by the Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences with the twin goals of promoting the fruitful exploration of the relationship between conflict and development, and to provide a suitable medium for the diffusion of marginalized perspectives. Moreover, the Series aims to help promote the formation of an alternative epistemic community of scholars and practitioners. Some of the principles of the previously mentioned alternative community are: a more egalitarian access to research findings, a democratization of the publication process, and an increased openness to alternative paradigms and perspectives.

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