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RE-MARKINGS

Vol. 8 No.2 September 2009

Iris Murdoch

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Somerset Maugham

Toni Morrison

Amitav Ghosh

Jhumpa Lahiri

Friedrich Nietzsche

Harold Pinter

Aravind Adiga

John Barth

Asif Currimbhoy

Mary Gordon

Buchi Emecheta

Jonah Raskin

David Ray

Kathleen Alcalá

Oriental Travelogue

Feminism in India

Slumdog Millionaire

CHIEF EDITOR : NIBIR K. GHOSH
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RE-MARKINGS

Vol. 8 No. 2 September 2009

ISSN 0972-611X

Re-Markings, a biannual journal of English Letters aims at providing a healthy forum for scholarly and authoritative views on broad socio-political and cultural issues of human import as evidenced in literature, art, television, cinema and journalism with special emphasis on New Literatures in English including translations and creative excursions

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Articles and research papers for publication in *Re-Markings* must conform to the *M.L.A. style sheet* and should not exceed 3000 words. Manuscripts should preferably be sent on a disk in text format along with a hard copy to the Chief Editor/Editor or through e-mail attachment to remarkings@hotmail.com. Each contribution must be accompanied by a declaration that it is an original contribution and has not been published anywhere else.

Chief Editor

Nibir K. Ghosh,
68 New Idgah Colony,
Agra-282001, U.P. (INDIA).
Telephone : +91 562 2230242
Cell.: +91 98970 62958
e-mail : ghoshnk@hotmail.com

Editor

A. Karunaker,
House No. 12-13-257,
Street No. 3, Brindavan Residency
Taranaka
Secunderabad-500017.
Tel: +91 40 27001349
e-mail : karunakeredrem@hotmail.com

Cover Design :
Allied Computer, Agra

Printed at : Aydee Offset, Agra

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Subscription Rates:

Single Copy : Rs.100 US \$15 UK £10
Annual (2 Issues) : Rs.200 US \$30 UK £20
Three Years (6 Issues) : Rs.500 US \$75 UK £50
(postage extra for registered Book-Post.)

Subscription may be sent by Money Order/ Demand Draft to

RE-MARKINGS
68 New Idgah Colony,
Agra-282001, U.P. (INDIA).

EDITORIAL

In the early years of the new millennium an American Fulbright Scholar to India (2004-05) was initially bugged on seeing a cow outside the international terminal after his arrival in New Delhi for it affirmed “every clichéd idea an outsider might have had about India.” But during the course of his stay in India he was happy to observe firsthand how the nation was rapidly coming out of its distant exotic past to assert itself as a potential power in the global market. He was happy to note that Indian prowess at information technology, fueled by keen foreign investments, had destroyed the idea of the mystical, exotic, ancient India that had previously captured the world’s curiosity. He was definitely aware that India had to contend with societal problems and deep-seated issues of inequality and poverty that needed to be addressed with all seriousness and gravity. Though he felt that trade, not philosophy and enlightenment, was now India’s prime focus, he was optimistic that “belief in life, that faith in the beauty and value of all life, ultimately will provide redemption and fulfillment for India.” Add to this testimony of hope the recent affirmative utterance of Thomas Friedman, the Pulitzer winning *New York Times* journalist, and you shall see a rejuvenated modern India in the making: “When we were young kids growing up in America, we were told to eat our vegetables at dinner and not leave them. Mothers said, ‘think of the starving children in India and finish the dinner.’ And now I tell my children: ‘Finish your homework. Think of the children in India who would make you starve, if you don’t?’”

Now contrast this utterance with the image of India that emerges from books like Aravind Adiga’s Booker winning *The White Tiger* or the Nobel Laureate V.S. Naipaul’s *An Area of Darkness* or the Oscar winning film *Slumdog Millionaire*. Notwithstanding the adulation bestowed by the Western horizon on the projection of the seamy side of India in such works of art, it is easy to comprehend why such accounts make even an ordinary Indian wince in sincere disgust. As an instance, I wish to recall the response generated in this subcontinent when Louis Malle produced his mammoth 378-minute documentary *Phantom India* (1969). Malle’s film provided occasional strong criticisms, especially of widespread poverty and bureaucratic corruption, the problematic status of women and the caste system, which although officially abolished with India’s independence from Great Britain in 1947, he found to be worse than ever 20 years later. Commenting on *Phantom India*, the maestro Satyajit Ray stated:

“personally, I don’t think any film director has any right to go to a foreign country and make a documentary film about it unless a) he is absolutely thorough in his groundwork on all aspects of the country - historical, social, religious and b) he does it with genuine love. Working in a dazed state - whether in admiration or disgust - can produce nothing of value.” Ray reiterated that what was deficient in the Louis Malle’s version of India was the integrity of design which, according to him, was a requisite that validated creativity in filmmaking and in writing.

In a similar vein, Nissim Ezekiel, in his brilliant essay entitled “Naipaul’s India and Mine,” exchanged facile fences with V.S. Naipaul who saw in India only areas of despairing darkness coloured by unmitigated pessimism. Ezekiel acknowledges without hesitation the existence of all the *darkness* Naipaul has illuminated in projecting “the land of his ancestors.” But he is quick to point out that even while holding a mirror to reality, a writer cannot and should not dispense with the imperatives of the integrity of intent and design. The hypersensitivity of the writer ought not to trample on the sensitivities of other people, he said. Ezekiel is not unaware of the vulnerability of India - the poverty and the squalor, physical, social and moral - but what he detests is “Mr. Naipaul’s refusal to see it in human and historic terms.” Ezekiel’s dissatisfaction is primarily with Naipaul’s “mode of argument, his falsifying examples.”

It is true that India is too beautifully diverse a nation to be faithfully represented by one clever movie or one clever book. Nevertheless, rather than deny ourselves the jubilation or otherwise that comes with coveted Bookers, Oscars or the Nobel, we must subject the respective works to the ultimate litmus test to determine whether in mirroring unpalatable reality they also sing of the ultimate triumph of the human spirit.

Besides ruminating on these sensitive areas, this volume of *Re-Markings* has plenty to offer in terms of its continued commitment to foreground broad socio-political and cultural issues of human import. I heartily thank all the contributors for enriching the journal with the decisive imprints of their perception of life and literature.

Nibir K. Ghosh
Chief Editor

CONTENTS

- Beauty in the Poverty of India:
A Review of *Slumdog Millionaire*
Jonah Raskin / 7
Jonah
Kathleen Alcalá / 10
- Reinventing a Form: John Barth's *Giles Goat-Boy*
Mojgan Abshavi / 13
- Feminism in India: Challenges and Obstacles
Mohammad Asim Siddiqui / 18
- Harold Pinter: A Tribute
Padmakar Pande / 26
- The Artist-God: Nietzsche's Aesthetic Philosophy and
The Poetry of W. B. Yeats
Sudeshna Majumdar / 31
- Dilemma of Name in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*
Apara Tiwari & Shahewar Syed / 38
- Environmental and Ecological Concerns in
Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*
Sanjay Kumar Misra / 46
- Somerset Maugham's View of Life
V.K. Singhal / 54
- Traditionalism to Modernism:
Shashi Deshpande's Feminism
Prabha Pant / 58
- Deconstruction: The Palindrome of Existentialism
Namrata Gupta / 64
The Oriental Travelogue: Exoticisation of the Orient
Chandra Prabha / 69
- Unselfing of the Self in Iris Murdoch's *Under The Net*
Geeta Bhandari & Vikas Bembi / 75
- Irony and Ambivalence in Emecheta's
The Joys of Motherhood
N.V.S.N. Laxmi & C. Sharada / 81

Portrayal of Indian Woman in
Shashi Deshpande's *The Binding Vine*
Chandip Kaur / 85
Identity and Violence in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*
Sangeeta Handa / 89
Between Captivity and Freedom:
A Study of Mary Gordon's *Pearl*
Raichel M. Sylus / 94
Asif Currimbhoy's *Inquilab*: A Glimpse at Indian Politics
Kamlakar K. Askar / 98
Alienation and Affirmation in
Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*
Pratima / 101

POETRY

Two Poems
David Ray
Nausea / 105
My Mistake / 105
Two Poems
Kedarnath Singh
Translated from the Hindi by G.L. Gautam
Passing Through a Dark Locality after Dusk / 107
Waiting for a Dust Storm / 107
Two Holi Poems
Ashok Tiwari
Holi – Fall Out / 108
The Joy of Holi / 109
Two Filmy Poems
Shweta Rao
Sholay / 110
Mughal-E-Azam / 110
Yearning for Bygone days
Vaibhav Shah / 111

BEAUTY IN THE POVERTY OF INDIA: A REVIEW OF *SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE*

Jonah Raskin

In January 2009, shortly before the Academy Awards in Hollywood, *The Los Angeles Times* – the newspaper that's largely for and about the U.S. film industry – published an article about *Slumdog Millionaire*. Entitled "Indians don't feel good about *Slumdog Millionaire*" the article claimed that Indians denounced the film because it offered western stereotypes of Indians, and "ignored the wealth and progress their country has seen." The reporter, Mark Magnier, presented quotations from two Indians, as though two Indians could represent and speak for all India. Magnier also talked to Shekhar Kapur, who directed the film *Elizabeth* (1998), and who said, "What's most relevant is that *Slumdog* is the most successful Indian film ever." Kapur might have added "in the west," since Bollywood films have been immensely popular in India for decades. Indians in India and Indians around the world flocked to see the picture because it's a Hollywood, not a Bollywood, picture, but let's not forget the very successful Indian film industry.

For several months after *Slumdog* won an Academy Award for Best Picture I asked all the Indians I knew or met – even at parties - what they thought about the picture, and everyone I talked to, including a documentary Indian filmmaker named Rita Banerji, said they liked it, or loved it and enjoyed it. I enjoyed the movie the first time I saw it in a movie theater in California, on a big screen, as well as the second time on a TV screen, though it works better on the big screen. The bigness of India demands a movie screen.

Perhaps 40 or so years ago when I wrote my first book, *The Mythology of Imperialism*, in which I dissect Rudyard Kipling's work about India I would have denounced *Slumdog* as imperialist. True, the movie is based on the novel *Q. & A.* by an Indian diplomat, Vikas Swarup. That gives the picture credibility. But the screenwriter, Simon Beaufoy, and the director, Danny Boyle, are both British, and the studio behind them is Warner Brothers. Forty years ago,

- **Prof. Jonah Raskin** is Chair of the Communication Studies Department at Sonoma State University, California, U.S.A.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

SHORT STORY

JONAH

Kathleen Alcalá

Once there was a girl who lived in a haunted house. She lived all alone, except for the ghosts, and an old white cat. When a ghost entered the room, the cat would raise its head, eyes wide, and stare for awhile, until it determined that the ghost was benevolent. It almost always was.

Intensely blue flowers grew around the house, violets that favored the shade. The girl wove long, elaborate shawls that took a long time to make, and had intricate textures woven into the silk and cotton. A shop in town sold them, and she could produce four of them a year. There was always a waiting list for the shawls.

One night, a great wind blew through the town. It rattled and lifted the edges of the roofs. Trash cans rolled down the streets, and plastic bags piled up against fences. The wind blew around the house where the girl lived. The cat opened his eyes wide and he stared and stared into the dark. His fur stood on end, and he trotted to the window to peer out.

The wind swirled around the house as the girl slept. It ruffled the slumbering flowers and dropped branches from the overhanging trees.

Finally, the wind entered the house. It caressed the threads on her loom, and fingered the fringe on the almost-completed shawl. Then, with a great exhalation, the wind left. The cat growled at it in good riddance, and resumed his vigil.

When the girl awoke, it was a sunny day. The sky was unusually clear and blue. The white cat slept in a beam of sunlight that lay across floor and the loom, touching the warp like fingers of gold. The girl finished the shawl and took it to the shop, where an old woman bought it as a gift for a child about to be born. When he entered the world, his mother wrapped him in the shawl and called him Jonah.

As Jonah grew older, he glimmered with both dark and light. He could have a sunny disposition or a terrible temper. He could talk a wild bird onto his hand or scream at his parents. They encouraged him to nap a lot under the white shawl.

One night, when Jonah was seven, he woke to find a giant bird perched at the head of his bed. The window was wide open, and the moon shone hollowly, like a giant bowl in the sky.

Jonah sat up to look at the bird. "What are you doing here?" he asked.

"I have come to take you to meet your fate."

"Already? I'm only seven."

"You don't have to stay with your fate," said the bird, "just meet it."

Jonah climbed onto the back of the giant bird. Grasping the feathers at the sides of its neck, Jonah crouched forward like a jockey. The bird hopped onto the windowsill, then soared off into the night sky.

Soon they came to a village by the sea. The boats rocked lazily in the harbor, the rigging creaked. Jonah had fallen back to sleep, so the bird let him down gently into one of the fishing boats. The water glimmered blackly all around him.

Before dawn the fishermen came to take their boats out on the water. When the fisherman who owned the boat where Jonah slept jumped in, he was so startled that he fell back with a shout, almost tipping the boat, and Jonah slipped overboard, still asleep. When he opened his eyes, he was falling through water that glimmered green and gold, then blue, as it grew darker and darker.

Jonah remembered talking to a giant bird, but he did not know where he was. As he drifted slowly downward, a giant fish with intricate scales came and wriggled between his legs. The fish buoyed up Jonah and took him back through the blue water, the green water, and the gold. When they breached the surface, Jonah could see that it was a beautiful day, wherever they were. The fish delivered Jonah back to the fisherman, who asked Jonah if he was all right. But the fisherman spoke a different language than Jonah, since they were far from his home, and Jonah could not understand him. This made Jonah laugh, thinking the fisherman was saying strange things on purpose. Then the fisherman knew that Jonah would be fine.

The fisherman took Jonah home to his family, made another place for him at the table, and his weary wife placed a cracked bowl of fish soup in front of him. In time, Jonah forgot his own language, learned that of the fisherman and his family, and lived a very happy life.

One day, when Jonah was about sixteen, the fisherman brought home a beautiful shawl for his wife, whom he loved very much. She smiled

as he draped it around her shoulders, and she threw the long fringe over her back. Jonah picked up the fringe, and the smell reminded him of a place with intensely blue flowers in the shade. He determined that he would find that place again, and set out, with the blessing of the fisherman and his wife, with a rucksack on his back full of potatoes and dried fish. He did not know in which direction to go, so he followed the sun.

After many adventures, he came to a house with blue flowers growing in the shade all around it. A girl was seated among the flowers, playing. Jonah smelled the breeze, and knew that this was the place. He continued into town and went to work.

When the girl was older, he married her, and went to live in the haunted house, for it was her mother who had made the shawls. The girl did not weave, but instead painted beautiful pictures that seem to show more than they really showed.

Her mother no longer wove, since her eyes had gone bad from pulling the fine threads through the cloth, but sat in the moonlight with a white cat on her lap, stroking it and occasionally talking to people no one else could see. The wind came and went through the open windows, blowing the curtains in long languorous billows, caressing their cheeks in their sleep.

Once in awhile, Jonah would wake and smell the sea, and remember the kind fisherman and his wife, and the story of the little boat. He still had a vague memory of a bird mixed up in that, but before he could bring it to the surface, the wind would lull him back to his dreams.

- ***Kathleen Alcalá*** is the author of a short story collection, *Mrs. Vargas and the Dead Naturalist (Calyx)*, and three novels set in 19th Century Mexico: *Spirits of the Ordinary*, *The Flower in the Skull*, and *Treasures in Heaven*. She has received the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award, the Governor's Writers Award, the Western States Book Award for Fiction, and the Washington State Book Award. She lives in Bainbridge Island (WA), U.S.A.



**REINVENTING A FORM:
JOHN BARTH'S *GILES GOAT-BOY***

Mojgan Abshavi

Every text of John Barth defies definition. His *The Sotweed Factor* (1960) has been characterized as anatomy masquerading as a historical novel or a *bildungsroman* and *Giles Goat Boy* (1966) is being spoken of as a menippean satire that has assumed the form of allegory or sacred text. Northrop Frye (1967) says of allegory that: "A writer is being allegorical whenever it is clear that he is saying 'by this also means that' ... In the *Faerie Queene*, for instance, the narrative systematically refers to historical examples, besides doing their own work in a poem. Allegory then is a contrapuntal technique, like canonical imitation in music. Barth himself describes his novel as "a comic old testament possessing an 'intricate structure' suggestive of musical form."

The nucleus of the story can be summed up as the story of a goat-boy who offers to prove himself a grand tutor. This then takes the shape of the archetypal hero's quest for enlightenment. His universe is a university and he wants to present a "revised new syllabus." He often dislocates his narrative voice to 'George' – a voice that mixes the vocabulary of the barnyard with the jargon of the academe and consistently combines the sacred with the profane, constantly reminding one of his dualistic nature. George's habitual inversions, normal syntax and his fondness for stilted locations and elevated diction are stylistic devices that suggest an affinity between his "revised new syllabus" and the English translations of classical epics.

In order to give his anti-hero mystic proportions, Barth employs formulas that seem to be designed to establish George as a savior: "I am he," appropriating the phrase used by Christ to identify himself as the Messiah. And again: "George is my name, my deeds have been heard of in Tower hall" We can hear echoes of Odysseus as he begins to recount his heroic deeds to Alcinous. What Barth, perhaps, wants us to believe is that this man is different from other men, that he has lived a life of mythic proportions or that he has proved that his life is a fulfillment of a prophecy.

- **Dr. Mojgan Abshavi** teaches in the Department of English, Payame Noor University (P.N.U.), Iran.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

FEMINISM IN INDIA: CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES

Mohammad Asim Siddiqui

A synchronic analysis of feminism reveals a great variety of differences within the ranks of feminists. If on the one hand we have political activists fighting for the empowerment of women, on the other hand there are feminist intellectuals drawing their theoretical tools from Marxist, structuralist, deconstructionist and other recent schools of criticism and theory. Of late there is a discussion of feminism in postcolonial terms. Consequently there has emerged a category called Third World Feminism. A study of all these schools points to a well known fact that there are so many ideas in the academy which have their origin in the West. The term third world feminism has also originated in the West. As Aijaz Ahmad points out, the whole concept of "third world literature has arisen primarily in the metropolitan University, in England and North America for the most part."¹ It is difficult to believe that the construction third world feminism does not carry a pejorative connotation. There is a view that it is through such terms that the first world feminism defines itself. The term 'third world woman' has been attributed by Trinh T. Minh-ha to the ideological tourism of Western/liberal feminism.² Gayatri Spivak also makes almost the same point in her postcolonial reading of Julia Kristeva's *About Chinese Women*. Leela Gandhi comments: "Spivak's incisive reading catches the authoritarian knower in the act of 'epistemic violence'—or authoritarian knowing. *About Chinese Women* is really a book about Kristeva: a text which deploys, once again, the difference of the 'third world woman' as grist to the mill of Western theory."³ The term third world feminism thus envisages a third world woman who is probably not as enlightened as her Western counterpart. She appears weak, oppressed and in need of help, in other words a white woman's burden. The essentialism implicit in the stereotype of the third world woman ignores the differences between women in the third world. For that matter the term third world itself pitted as it is against the Anglo-American world carries a pejorative connotation.

- **Dr. Mohammad Asim Siddiqui** is Reader in the Department of English, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.

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HAROLD PINTER: A TRIBUTE

PADMAKAR PANDE

Harold Pinter, who died on the Christmas Eve in 2008 at the age of 78, was the most influential, provocative and poetic dramatist of the contemporary British Theatre. In addition to pursuing parallel careers as a dramatist, actor, director and screen-writer, he was also an active and vigorous political polemicist. He will always be remembered for his plays as also for his ability to create dramatic poetry out of everyday common speech.

Pinter was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 2005. For the last eight years or so, he was fighting a host of illness, including the terminal cancer of the esophagus and yet time and again he came out to support the causes in which he firmly believed, such as his opposition to the imperialistic policies of the United States of America, its war against Iraq as also the foreign policies of the Blair Government in Great Britain. This brought attacks on Pinter from many quarters. Not a single leader in Britain congratulated Pinter for the award of the Nobel Prize. Many people opposed the award of Nobel Prize to him for his vocal and trenchant criticism of militarism, war and the erosion of democratic rights. But Pinter remained a defiant champion of the cause in which he so firmly believed.

The Swedish Academy's citation of the Nobel Prize states unequivocal position of Pinter "as the foremost representative of the British Drama in the second half of the 20th Century" and recognized that his opposition to imperialist war and his dedication to freedom of speech and democratic rights can be seen as a development of the early Pinter's analysis of threat and injustice. As the Swedish Academy noted, Pinter's hostility to oppression, and war were very intimately connected with his artistry as a dramatist. We can see that the same rage at injustice and oppression has fuelled his polemics against the wars in the Gulf and the Balkans, his antiwar poetry and all of his 29 plays. For instance, in *The Birthday Party*, when Stan is being taken away, Petey calls out, "Stan, don't let them tell you what to do" and Pinter has said that he has lived that line all his life, never more than now.

- **Dr. Padmaker Pande** retired as Head, Department of English, S.K. Porwal College, Kamptee, Nagpur. He is the Secretary, Indian Association for English Studies.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

**THE ARTIST-GOD:
NIETZSCHE'S AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY AND
THE POETRY OF W. B. YEATS**

Sudeshna Majumdar

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) is considered as one of the leading voices in the dialogue involving Modernism and Postmodernism. His reinvention of the cult of Dionysus greatly influenced the mystic symbolism of W. B. Yeats's (1865-1939) poetry. The present study is an attempt to search and establish a link between their thoughts. Both the philosopher and the poet strove to create the cult of the 'artist-god' as a harbinger of 'creative spontaneity' or 'instinctive revival' that would serve as an antidote to the twentieth century materially sated western society. In the course of this study I shall endeavour to elucidate how both Nietzsche and Yeats used the motif of 'dance' to explain the rhythm of this 'revival' and most importantly, how they applied the changing dynamism of a dancing body or the cult of the artist-god as a recurrent builder and destroyer to highlight the artistic impact of the 'moment' that was gaining importance in the early twentieth century modernist aesthetics.

Nietzsche, in *The Birth of Tragedy (BT)*, gives an alternative interpretation of Greek civilization and culture, which were hitherto considered to be the ideal parameters of aesthetic perfection in the Western world. In *The Birth of Tragedy* he traces the genesis of "tragedy" to the spirit of music in ancient Greece. In the 1886 edition of his work, the title read: *The Birth of Tragedy, or Hellenism and Pessimism: A New Edition with an attempt at a Self-Criticism*. In this modified version of the title Nietzsche explicitly defines the fundamental debating points of his aesthetic philosophy—the debate between the Apollonian (logical, institutionalised Hellenism) restraint and the Dionysian (irrational, resolute pessimism) self-forgetfulness.

He locates the origin of tragedy specifically in the dithyrambic chorus of the ancient Dionysian ritual. In the classical Greek tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides the chorus always sang in unison.

- **Sudeshna Majumdar** is Junior Research Fellow at the Department of English & OMEL, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan (West Bengal).

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

DILEMMA OF NAME IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S *THE NAMESAKE*

Apara Tiwari & Shahewar Syed

The novel entitled *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri makes explicit the tensions of the migrant ethnic assimilation and the pull towards a new sense of plural, multicultural society. This paper aspires to respond to the idea as to how name plays a significant role in recognising an expatriate's bonafide entity in trans-cultural surroundings by relating to

As a young boy Gogol doesn't mind his name, although it is seen in pieces in road signs: GO LEFT, GO RIGHT, GO SLOW. But the very fact that his name is never an option on key chains or metal pins or refrigerator magnets, often makes him wonder of its uncommonness. Still it remains an odd reality that he knows he has been named after a famous Russian author, born in a previous century, and the author's name and his is known throughout the world and will live forever. Contrary to the uncommonness of his name in America, on his visit to India he is exposed to six pages full of Gangulis in the Calcutta telephone directory. Stumbling upon the disparity in both the cultural milieu he is expected to get used to, Gogol ironically remains baffled.

The episode where the name Ganguli on their mailbox has been mischievously shortened to "GANG" by a group of rowdy louts and is discovered by Gogol, points out towards the spirit of "desecration" of the uncommon, a rejection of the migrants by the Americans, and directed more towards his parents rather than Gogol or Sonia.

Strangely enough, on an occasion of a school's field trip to a cemetery, in his search for names on the graves, there is a quest to that surrounding initially, then shaping his life in the process.

Name carries a mystifying power with it, specially for the women of India, relating themselves to men in their lives.

- **Dr. Apara Tiwari** is Head, Department of P.G. Studies and Research in English, Govt. Mahakoshal Arts and Commerce Autonomous College, Jabalpur.
- **Dr. Shahewar Syed** is Assistant Professor of English, Hawabagh Women's College, Jabalpur.

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ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECOLOGICAL CONCERNS IN AMITAV GHOSH'S THE HUNGRY TIDE

Sanjay Kumar Misra

Dolphins, mangroves, tigers and waterways in the Sunderbans are what one remembers most about Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Hungry Tide* which came out in 2004 and was instantly hailed as the first truly ecological Indian novel in English. This impression is justified because the first and foremost things that drove Amitav Ghosh to write this novel were the Sunderbans and the river dolphins there. This novel exhorts us to gear up fast in order to be able to save the natural wealth in the Sunderbans from decay and destruction.

Ghosh's forays into history, politics, medical research and anthropology are well known. For instance, his book *In An Antique Land* covered his anthropological excursions in two Egyptian villages; in *The Calcutta Chromosome*, he dived into archives and history for the discovery of the malaria bug with substantial inputs from highly advanced computer technology; and *The Glass Palace*, his magnum opus, grappled with history of India and South-East Asia in the last one hundred and fifty years; not to forget, *The Shadow Lines*, his most acclaimed novel so far, debated notions of nationalism, nationhood and political divisions.

But his crossing, and a very serious one, into the field of ecology and environment has been quite refreshing and rewarding. As is typical of Ghosh, his interventions are never fleeting or casual; he takes his own time to thoroughly study, travel and research for his novels. Talking about the research done for *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh said in an interview, "When I write a story I like to get the background in its entirety. The entire book took four years to do, of which at least half was spent on research" (*The Week* 2004).

The Hungry Tide covers a period of about three decades from late 1970s up to the early years of the 21st century and is set in the Sunderbans, literally meaning, beautiful forests. This region is situated below Calcutta where the Ganges flowing from the Himalayas through North Indian plains empties into the sea, the Bay of Bengal.

- **Sanjay Kumar Misra** is Lecturer in the Department of English, R.B.S. College, Agra.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

SOMERSET MAUGHAM'S VIEW OF LIFE

V.K. Singhal

Somerset Maugham's concept of life is most scientific, rational, biological, practical and matter-of-fact. With his medical background and training, he does not believe in false idealism, he believes in realism. Even if there is idealism about Eastern life and its majestic glory, it is in the background; it inspires man for nobler actions and loftier aims and objectives. He does not believe in any morality or false preaching. He is a practical idealist believing in the ultimate good and happiness of mankind. He wants that life should be enjoyed perfectly and to the best of our ability. We have to face the music of life with all its ups and downs joyfully and to the best of our capacity. Maugham has made his concept of life very clear in his enlightening works like *A Writer's Note Book* and *The Summing Up*. He has justified it in his stories, novels and dramas.

His concept of life has made him universally popular and his works are enjoyed and appreciated everywhere. Life is worth living and his works are pleasant, delightful and inspiring. Therefore, they have a universal relevance. Life has its secrets and mysteries. Not only scientists and sociologists but also literary artists have tried to explore it. The artificialities and elegance of life too have their own value. The skin-deep pomp and show of the Western Civilization has its own relevance.

Maugham has conceived and perceived life from his own angle and point of view. His intuition or concept of life is governed by his early life, education, medical background, varied experiences, adventures and the journey of the world. Consequently, he has evolved a materialistic approach to life and its problems.

Maugham's total attitude to life and all its aspects is that of a humorist. With his sense of scrutiny which he inherited from his father, he could understand people in their right perspective. The humorist has a quick eye for the humbug; he does not always recognise the saint. He understands the common man as such with his weaknesses and qualities. He is not angry when he laughs at them, he rather understands them and pities.

- **Dr. V.K. Singhal**, D.Litt., retired as Head, Department of English, K.R. College, Mathura.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

TRADITIONALISM TO MODERNISM: SHASHI DESHPANDE'S FEMINISM

Prabha Pant

Shashi Depspande, essayist, short-story writer, novelist, and a woman of the changed mental frame is one of the Indian women novelists projecting the move of women from traditionalism to modernism in her writings. She was greatly inspired by her father in her formative years. Once she discovered her identity as a writer, there was no stopping her. To take up the issue of women in her writings as early as the 70s was not only significant because feminism had made a mark the world over at that time but because it made itself felt in India as well. She was aware of the impact of feminism and she writes in her essay "Why I am a Feminist" how fortunate she was to be writing during this period: "I have no doubt at all that it is the women's movement which has made it possible for an increasing number of women to have more space to breathe. I know that as a writer I am privileged to be living at a time when the women's movement has made it possible for my voice to be heard, for the things I write about to be taken seriously, looked upon issues that concern all of society, and not dismissed as 'women's stuff'" (83). Deshpande writes in her essay, "Writing from the Margin," that feminism, "has caused a rethinking on the whole issue of women's lives, their roles, their identities, it has given women possibilities in their lives which could not have been imagined a century back, it has given them confidence and strength they have been able to use to forge ahead" (149). Shashi Deshpande's feminism is not being anti-men or rejecting home but is something positive. She believes that "women are not inferior beings but one half of the same species" (83). Deshpande writes about women in her novels with this positive attitude. She places them in a patriarchal society and shows them as suffering women, as rebellious women and as enlightened women. She writes from the heart of social experience. She writes about a young woman's rape, about sati, about women living miserable lives with their worthless drunkard husbands and of course most of her protagonists are writers - they tell their own stories and the stories of other women.

- **Dr. Prabha Pant** is Lecturer in English in the College of Basic Sciences & Humanities, G.B. Pant University of Agriculture & Technology, Pantnagar.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

DECONSTRUCTION: THE PALINDROME OF EXISTENTIALISM

Namrata Gupta

During my first few rendezvous with Deconstruction I used to scratch my brain wondering that deconstruction is an echo of something. And an in-depth probing revealed that life is a chain reaction, one thing follows the other. It appeared that Deconstruction has many similarities with the philosophy of Existentialism and that Deconstruction evolved out of Existentialism. This paper is an overview related with a philosophical outlook towards both the concepts - Existentialism and Deconstruction.

The term Existentialism signifies an attitude nurtured due to a sense of disorientation and confusion in the face of an apparently meaningless or absurd world. It rejects the traditional systematic Philosophy as too incomprehensible, abstract and remote from reality. Deconstruction is a term used in Philosophy, Literary Criticism and Social Sciences, popularized by Jacques Derrida (a French Philosopher) in the 1960s. It involves the close reading of the text to demonstrate that rather than being a unified whole, every text is full of contradictory meanings. A Deconstructionist believes that language is arbitrary, and that meaning is fully indeterminate and never absolute. Deconstruction has created lot of complexities as it encompasses vast corpus of Phenomenology, Structural linguistics, aesthetics, politics, feminism and Hermeneutics.

The two schools of thought namely Existentialism and Deconstruction talk about life and text respectively. Life and text are two key terms of this paper. It is so because of two reasons, one that it is widely believed that life and literature are interlinked and secondly because the dominating discourse in the present day era talks about this life or world as a text and vice versa.

Evolution has been a perennial process in life and likewise in literature. From the logocentric world of God, faith, religion, myths, and philosophical works to the present day graphocentric maze of relative or subjective discourses, literature has traveled many a mile. Life has taken a leap from faith to "Nadaism." Life has evolved and has been moulded into many shapes since antiquity.

- **Namrata Gupta** is Lecturer in English at Dev Samaj College for Women, Ferozepur City.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

THE ORIENTAL TRAVELOGUE: EXOTICISATION OF THE ORIENT

Chandra Prabha

The vast new world, the 'East', encountered by the European travelers was almost an invention for the European people. As defined, invented and produced by their mental frameworks and acquired concepts, it created a huge literature about the places of exotic beings, haunting memories and remarkable experiences. These travelogues are of particular relevance for the exoticising ideologies of the Imperialists. The Colonialists equipped with different perspectives came to the new world with a motive either to fulfill their political or moral agenda or to deal with its bewildering reality. In the process, the colonial culture and the indigenous culture intersected and clashed with each other and a new culture was formed. The day-to-day routine, the life-styles, attitudes and activities, which were ordinary to the Native, appeared strange and exotic to the colonizers. Rather than associating with the unfamiliar culture - its strangeness, its differences, its exotic sensuousness - the colonizers opted to generalize them and to marginalize them as mysterious, grotesque and in general pose it as being hostile to European understanding. The new culture subsequently was labeled as the "other," the "Orient" in literary references.

The colonial literature is, on the whole, filled with stereotyped images of the Orient, which reflects the white man's relationship with the colonized peoples. It also reveals the colonist's celebration of 'difference' from the colonized and their affirmation of glory and power. The term "Orientalism" has been used to designate this discursive practice in its widest sense. Edward W. Said in *Orientalism* has studied the coherence of Western discourses about "the orient" or the East. Said argues that the way people in the west have perceived the orient has developed a set of discourses. These discourses of orientalism posit an allegedly superior western self in relation to an allegedly inferior non-western other. Orientalism begins by assuming that there is a radical distinction between the East and the West.

- **Dr. Chandra Prabha** worked on "Exoticisation and Otherness in Raj Literature" for her Ph.D. from Patna University, Patna.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

UNSELFING OF THE SELF IN IRIS MURDOCH'S *UNDER THE NET*

Geeta Bhandari & Vikas Bemb

Iris Murdoch essentially believes that change in the “being” or the “self” is not caused by will but by a deep process of unselfing. For that, what is required is a liberating force capable of removing the illusions of one’s mundane egoism. This transcended “being” can be seen as selfless and enlightened individual, purged of all selfish desires. Viewed in this context, *Under the Net*¹ is a conscious attempt by Murdoch to pattern the story of self-deluding, neurotic, ego-centric male narrator, Jake Donaghue in terms of his notions of freedom and philosophical approaches to reality. He begins with partial self-delusion and is exposed relentlessly to the realities and “otherness” of others and is partially redeemed at the end.

In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre presents the paradoxical nature of freedom and sees the individual as a tragic and lonely representative of humanity.² Murdoch, like Sartre, feels that human beings are affected as moral and emotional beings, both by muddled and confused concepts and notions about the realities of their being. The ability to see other non-things clearly and to celebrate them freely and justly is, in essence, freedom and is distinct from trapped egocentric fantasy. She puts all these facts of life in a very convincing manner in *Under the Net* which startled the reviewers and critics and attracted myriad of reviews. In the words of G.S. Fraser: “*Under the Net* presents an image of the private will, at odd with the ‘social spirit’ and the needs of external co-operation.” Society is seen as precisely the net which is always coming down to catch us through, if only later to be caught in other finer meshes.³

Murdoch has herself confessed in her talks that all the major themes are to some degree dealt with in her first novel. The title refers to the image of Wittgenstein’s “net” of language of form or theory which the mind puts over the muddle and chaos of reality.

- **Dr. Geeta Bhandari** is on the faculty of S.D.P. College for Women, Ludhiana.
- **Vikas Bemb** teaches English in Ludhiana College of Engineering, Katani Kalan (Ludhiana).

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

IRONY AND AMBIVALENCE IN EMECHETA'S *THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD*

N.V.S.N. Lakshmi & C. Sharada

Being a woman, and African born, I see things through an African Woman's eyes. I chronicle the little happenings in the lives of the African Women I know. I did not know that by doing so I was going to be called a feminist; then I am an African feminist with a small 'f'. In my books I write about families because I still believe in families – I have no sympathy for a woman who deserts her children, neither do I have sympathy for a woman who insists on staying in a marriage with a brute of man, simply to be respected.

--Emecheta, *Feminism With Small 'f'!*

Buchi Emecheta is an African woman writer who sets her eyes on the conditions of women living both on their home continent and abroad. *The Joys of Motherhood* is among her most pivotal works as it offers critical commentary on colonialism, tradition, capitalism and women's roles in patriarchal society. She criticizes the suppressive and repressive attitudes commonly held by many Ibo men. Emecheta questions the repressive attitudes and behaviours that silence women and stops them from realizing their real potentials. She also turns her eye to the white power, which brings a new economic order and community standards and ways of life to the native residents.

The Joys of Motherhood is a novel with motherhood as its theme and the irony of its title appears to be part of the significant body of feminist literature concerned with women's experience of motherhood in patriarchal cultures.

The novel has a striking opening scene, where protagonist, Nnu Ego, a young mother, after discovering the sudden and inexplicable death of her four week old son, slips into a state of neurosis and runs to throw herself into a river to put an end to her overwhelming pain of losing her precious baby.

- **Dr. N.V.S.N. Lakshmi** is a Freelancer based in Hyderabad.
- **Dr. C. Sharada** is Assistant Professor, Department of English, Nizam College (Osmania University), Hyderabad.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

**PORTRAYAL OF INDIAN WOMAN IN
SHASHI DESHPANDE'S *THE BINDING VINE***

Chandip Kaur

Ideals emerge from the depths of our being and soar to the height of stars. They become the life force of a nation and represent the spirit of the age. Presenting such an ideal concept of womanhood has been the pre-occupation of many writers of Indian English fiction down the line but Shashi Deshpande perhaps comes closest to it. She is indeed one of the most significant of the contemporary Indian women novelists in English. She belongs to that category of women writers of the 1990s who have boldly taken up the challenge of reinterpreting old myths and the validity of traditions and customs that circumscribe women to narrow slots. Unlike Kamala Markandaya and Anita Desai, she has critically analyzed Indian woman's response to the trials and tribulations of life and how she tries to sustain her identity as wife, mother and above all as a human being in contemporary society.

It is common knowledge that the women who constitute half of the world's population are paradoxically not treated at par with men in all areas of human activity. They are confined to their homes, oppressed, suppressed and marginalized in the matter of sharing the available opportunities for the fulfillment of their lives. Possessing a rare insight into the entire panorama of woman's plight in the present day custom-bound Indian society, Shashi Deshpande has done a commendable job in highlighting the subtle factors contributing to the none too happy position of women in the emerging society. Her woman protagonists are all drawn from the middle class and are sensitive, intelligent, educated and career oriented.

A unique aspect of her writing is that she neither writes about the exotic aspects of India i.e. kings, holy men, tiger hunts, snake charmers etc. nor the grinding penury of the Indian masses. Rather she writes about another deprivation i.e. emotional. The women bereft of love, understanding and companionship form the centre stage of her novels.

- **Dr. Chandip Kaur** is Senior Lecturer in the Post-Graduate Department of English, SCD Govt. College, Ludhiana.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

Identity and Violence in ARAVIND ADIGA'S *THE WHITE TIGER*

Sangeeta Handa

I was immediately drawn to Aravind Adiga's latest work *The White Tiger* because an Indian had once again won an international acclaim by winning the Booker Prize for his debut novel. I was also attracted towards this book because of the media-hype and I was crazy to be the first one in my circle of friends to have read it. But, like the film *Slumdog Millionaire*, the first reading of the novel was a great disappointment to an Indian like me. On top of it, the condescending reviews that trickled from the west, made me feel very ashamed and insulted about this Indian writer.

English-Language Asian writers have adopted all manner of styles in the last three decades, Raj nostalgia, magic realism, Zola-like fatalism, in their attempts to encapsulate India. What makes this much trumpeted debut novel by Aravind Adiga such a triumph is the strikingly contemporary voice with which it skewers its subject: a beguiling mix of pitch-black humor and devastating cynicism that feels both refreshingly modern and bracingly direct. As India rushes with careless abandon towards its longed-for status as an economic superpower and as the gap between rich and poor grows ever wider, the country has found in Adiga an acerbic commentator more than capable of chronicling its often grotesque inequalities. Such reviews showed that even after honouring an Indian writer, with such awards as Booker, the western literati is in no mood to acknowledge their originality and consider their writings as having "adopted all manner of styles" of the western writers.

My expectation from a literary work is that the words should enthrall me, like Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Ghalib or Shiv Kumar Batalvi's intoxicating poetry. It should numb my senses and transport me to the dizzy, ecstatic heights, which eventually turn into a bliss of solitude forever. Novels like Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* or Kiran Desai's *Inheritance of Loss* have also dealt with such sensitive issues as Adiga has taken up, but somewhere that dark humour, that scathing satire on Indian society is missing.

- **Dr. Sangeeta Handa** teaches English at Govt. Mohindra College, Patiala.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

BETWEEN CAPTIVITY AND FREEDOM: A STUDY OF MARY GORDON'S *PEARL*

Raichel M. Sylus

Mary Gordon's *Pearl*, the last of her novels, is a tale of family bonds sundered and reknit. The book is divided into three parts viz. The Call, Travelers, and Dubliners. The story entangles on a Christmas eve when Maria Meyers receives a call stating that her daughter Pearl, who had gone to Ireland for her studies, had chained herself to a flagpole for some reason not stated then. Desperate, as a mother, she leaves for Dublin with Joseph Kasperman, their family friend to whom Pearl was close. The conversation between Maria and Joseph on board the flight to Dublin is an eye opener to the readers on the identity that Pearl faces since it explores Pearl's childhood and their complicated relationships, though it sounds like any other ordinary story.

Gordon, the 2008 New York State Author and an acclaimed novelist with seven novels to her credit, writes on women's issues. Among her many themes, that include Irish Immigration and Catholicism, is the search for an individual's identity. One of the remarkable aspects of this novel is that it centers on the traumatic narrative of Pearl. The novel also contextualizes her life and the lives of those around her, informing the readers that isolation is one aspect with which an individual struggles to exist. The title carries the name of the protagonist of the novel, who was a pearl to everyone.

A person's identity consists of many incidents, actions and events in isolation that finally turn up in determining who he or she is in society. In the novel under study, it is Pearl who suffers throughout to carve an identity for herself. In the process is exposed all the shams of contemporary society. Pearl is a vibrant heroine who is in quest for achieving something beyond real life. She personifies the inert power a woman possesses to voice her idea to the world through her actions rather than words. The paper is entitled "Between Captivity and Freedom" because Pearl acts as the lens through which the twin concepts of captivity and freedom are portrayed.

- **Raichel M. Sylus** is Lecturer in English at Avinashilingam University for Women, Coimbatore.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

**ASIF CURRIMBHOY'S *INQUILAB*:
A GLIMPSE AT INDIAN POLITICS**

Kamlakar K. Askar

Asif Currimbhoy's play *Inquilab* (Revolution) realistically reveals India's political degeneration against the backdrop of a violent Naxalite conflict between the peasants and the landlords which is the result of an unbridgeable gap between the privileged and the underprivileged, the poor and the rich in the society. This paper attempts to locate the play *Inquilab* in the socio-political context of post-Independence India.

In the play, the politician, Devdas and the Big Wheel Politician from the Centre are the embodiment of the corrupt, immoral elements in the post-Independence Indian politics. Devdas who is in the State Government of West Bengal, is in utter apathy towards the burning situation of violence and anarchy, caused by the Naxalite movement in the State. There is not even a semblance of law and order in the State; the innocent are being killed; the properties of the rich landlords are being grabbed by force and violence; bombing and killing is rampant in the streets in broad daylight.

Devdas, though in power, does not feel any responsibility to assure the people security of their lives and assets; he does not feel ashamed of expressing his helplessness. He is simply reluctant to take any stringent action against the rampant Naxalite violence. He has placating double standard policy towards the Naxalite revolt for he does not want to lose his peasants' votes in the election. He has to respond to his landlord friend, Jain, because he knows that Jain has full potential to influence, nay even to purchase the majority of peasants' votes. Embarrassed by Jain, Devdas meets Shomik, the Naxal leader, personally at his house, and attempts to dissuade Shomik from his way of violence, by way of a typical shrewd method, being commonly resorted to in the present Indian politics as "bribe." He offers Shomik Party membership and "a piece of land" in the distribution of surplus land, so that Shomik should get cut off from the Naxal revolt. Devdas's chameleon disposition does not remain hidden when he tells Shomik:..

- **Kamlakar K. Askar** is Senior Lecturer in English at Dhanwate National College, Nagpur.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

ALIENATION AND AFFIRMATION IN TONI MORRISON'S *THE BLUEST EYE*

Pratima

Black women writers have contributed significantly to unravel the urge for affirmation and identity in the African-American pantheon. The legacies begun by Phillis Wheatley and furthered by writers like Zora Neale Hurston and Dorothy West led to the emergence of writers like Toni Morrison, Gloria Naylor, Toni Cade Bambara, Alice Walker, Ntozake Shange, Audre Lorde and others.

Toni Morrison is the first African-American author ever to receive both the Pulitzer and the Nobel Prize for literature. She is more widely read by a broader cross section of the American reading public than any other black writer has ever been in this country. What distinguishes Morrison from other writers is the affirmative approach of her characters towards life. The same note of alienation and affirmation has featured her first novel *The Bluest Eye*.

The Bluest Eye (1970) tells the story of two black families, the family of Breedloves - Colly, his wife Pauline and their two children, Pecola and Sammy - and that of Claudia who is the narrator of the novel. The novel is about the tragedy of Breedloves, specifically the tragedy of Pecola Breedlove who hates her black self and yearns for blue eyes. She believes that blue eyes will make her white and extinguish her position as a pariah and give her the love and security that are desperately missing from her life. She takes blue eyes as panacea for all her problems caused by racial discriminations. The plot culminates with Cholly's rape of his daughter Pecola. The resulting pregnancy further aggravates the condition of Pecola as pariah. The girl's need to be loved takes the doomed form of yearning for blue eyes. The insanity of this flight from reality comes to fruition after the death of the baby when she actually believes herself to have acquired them.

Morrison's goal of being true to oneself exists for two of its characters, Claudia and Frieda Mcteer who offer sharp contrast to the family of Breedloves.

- **Dr. Pratima** is Lecturer in English in the Faculty of Engineering & Technology, R.B.S. College, Agra.

Note: For complete article contact remarkings@hotmail.com

POETRY

TWO POEMS

David Ray

NAUSEA

What I love about this anthology
is the absolute absence of war,
and no sign at all that hunger
might be a problem for some,
although not for these poets
who sound as if they live in a world
like the Utopia I've dreamed of,
a planet peopled by flowers
and all four describable seasons,
but never a line for beggars or those
whose diseases are hardly worthy
of villanelle elegies. I approve
the lack of knowledge of history,
for today what good would it do
when few are concerned about what
happens in foreign places where kids
are blown apart by our bombs?

I am charmed by the cuteness of
laureates found in all the anthologies,
and most relieved to know that no word
must be expended in worry about
the state of the world outside our nation.
Yet now and then for real news I turn
to the pages of Whitman or Blake
or the wise words of Shakespeare,
Tagore, or the old curmudgeon Frost.

MY MISTAKE

*Not one of my relatives engages in the
writing of poems.-- Wislawa Szymboska*

Odd that so much can be lost to them!
Or perhaps each saw from the outset
that nothing in sight was truly poetic
if one should decide it is not, and that
it would be a futile task, and perhaps

heretical, to try transmuting base lead
of the quotidian to gold of the eternal.
I, however, have always cared too much
for things my cousins deem unworthy
of notice, nor do they themselves desire
to compete for a Pulitzer Prize, which,
frankly, I'm sure they have never heard of.
Lucky are they who have indifference
sufficient for saving them from the fate
of a lifetime wrestling recalcitrant words.

As for me, I gawk bulb-eyed at the world,
though aware that Gerard Manley Hopkins
was mocked because he sometimes gazed
for an hour or more to discern the soul
of a tree, a bug, or a flower. When he died
his works were burned to make certain
he had written nothing heretic, but a few
poems in sprung rhythm somehow survived
due to the devotion of his friend Bridges.

As for the contempt of his superiors,
a priest must get used to that sort of thing.
Even Thomas Merton, closer to home,
fled cloisters whenever he could.
The lesson seems to be that when you
are foolish enough to write poetry
you are bound to lose the respect
of those wise enough to not write it.
Wang Wei told us, although in Chinese,
that it took a thousand years to decipher,
that a poet is always a mistake,
and that is all there is to it.

- **Prof. David Ray** is an American author, poet and teacher currently based in Tucson, Arizona, U.S.A. Recent books by David Ray include *Music of Time* (2006), *The Death of Sardanapalus and Other Poems of the Iraq Wars* (2004), *One Thousand Years: Poems about the Holocaust* (2004), *The Endless Search: A Memoir* (2003), and *The Maharani's New Wall* (poems written in India).



Two Poems

KEDARNATH SINGH

Translated from the Hindi by G.L. Gautam

Passing Through a Dark Locality After Dusk

Let the soul be filled with
Mild strokes of incessant milking
Let the soul be filled with the
first quivering flame of an earthen lamp
Let the soul be filled with the
first quatrain of *Manas*
before an unsteady old vision
and be filled up with the
Seething of the last couplet
Let your eyes be filled up with
The deep emptiness of waiting
Let your ears be filled with
The howling of jackals
On the village borders and the
Unrest of an upraised sting of scorpion
Listen poet, listen !
Before there arises
Cry of hunger and the
Dark tears you down
Fill the whole world into
A small breathing case.

WAITING FOR A DUST STORM

Stop! Restive mind!
We don't turn a deaf ear to a voice
Whether that voice comes from a street,
Over seas, or a desert
Wherever it comes from
All our pores will remain open
Until ages to resound that voice
Stop! Restive mind!
In a moment from now
Will rage a dust storm
Outdoor on stroll
We shall then be off

Where will you take me then
I shall be amidst the fury of the wind
Holding your hand like a severed strand!
Stop! Restive mind!
Listen to your arteries in this scorching noon
When the city bells fall silent
Throw open all the windows
These doors, all the ventilators,
We are awaiting a dust storm.

- **Prof. Kedarnath Singh** is a noted Hindi poet of the modernist trend. He retired as Professor in the School of Indian Languages, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. His *Akaal Mein Saaras* received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1989. He has also received the Hindi Akademi Award and the much coveted "Kumaran Ashan" (Kerala) Award.
- **DR. G.L. GAUTAM** IS READER IN ENGLISH AT LAJPAT RAI (PG) COLLEGE, SAHIBABAD, GHAZIABAD.



TWO HOLI POEMS

Ashok Tiwari

HOLI – FALL OUT

Every spring
We burn evil
And watch it go up
In smoke.
Every spring
Evil Holika perishes
In flames.
Holy Prahlad remains.
And we colour one another
With powders: red, green,
Pink and yellow,
And joyfully drench one another
In coloured water
To celebrate the triumph
Of good over evil.
Yet evil lives

Flourishes and thrives,
Scornfully pushing good aside,
Evil is a nuclear bomb
Exploding, mushrooming,
Producing a fall-out
That spreads evil farther,
Sends it deeper
Into our beings,
Transforming us slowly
From beings in God's own image
To creatures in the image of
Satan, year after year.
May Lord Krishna come again.
*"Paritranaya sadhunaam,
vinashayacha dushkritaam,
Dharam sanstha panarthaya,
Sambhavami yuge yuge."*
To protect believers and to
Destroy sinners,
To establish religion firmly, I
appear in different eras."

THE JOY OF HOLI

God is flinging colour from above,
On the yearning earth with love:
Fistfuls on bougainvillea,
Heralding a festival of cheer,
Orange, yellow and red,
White, pink and violet.
Violet too, on the Jacarunda supple,
On the Kachnar, indigo and purple,
Sprays of scarlet on Saimal and Gulmohar trees,
All swaying gloriously in the breeze.
Blossom clusters soft and pale,
Of the future joys tell the tale,
On mango, drumstick and mulberry,
Promising the boon of God's plenty.
On branches there are sprigs of green,
Where a week ago few leaves were seen.
In His joy, let's all join Him,
Young, old, fat and thin.

On one another let us shower,
Coloured water and powder.
To the beat of the *Dhol*,
Let our hearts gaily throb.
Lusty youth; sway and dance!
Little children, jump and prance!
Come everyone, young and old,
Sing love songs daringly bold!
Lissome belles whirl and swirl!
Caution to the wind let's hurl!
Let's be gay; let's be merry,
And revel in God's great glory!

- **Dr. Ashok Tiwari** retired as Professor of English,
University of Rajasthan, Jaipur.



TWO FILMY POEMS

Shweta Rao

SHOLAY

Potential gays
Gaze at the *tongewali*
A woman who talks while cracking
Her whip on the mute Mare
Wearing anklets
An ex-officer without arms
Arms two thugs to hunt down
A bandit who laughs a killing laughter
The virgin who escapes gang rape
Gets the guy
While the widow
Blows out a candle
Again.

MUGHAL-E-AZAM

The much adored, idiosyncratic emperor
Raids son's love nest
The son, obsessively oedipal
In his new found masculinity
Is not afraid of papa-with-pleated-pants

Whilst the vale of vulnerability
Between towering hyper-males,
Dancing doll faints femininely.

- **Dr. Shweta Rao** is pursuing the Ph.D. program at I.I.T. Roorkee. She has been selected as a Fulbright Doctoral Fellow to University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign, U.S.A.



YEARNING FOR BYGONE DAYS

Vaibhav Shah

Where are those sweet days?
When I was only a child
Worldly affairs had not spoiled my mind
The root cause of happiness
Lay in my innocent ignorance
I was as pure as white snow
How to deceive others I did not know
In God I had great faith
Though much I was afraid of death
Love for me was only a question
That I could think without any tension
Going to school for me so far
Was like going to an endless war
Teachers approaching with duster and chalk
Appeared to me like the fearful hawk
Homework for me was a huge burden
I had to ask them always for pardon
Gone are the days, spent is the age,
Trapped I am now in a parrot's cage
Longing for those beautiful days
Can anyone tell me where are they?

- **Vaibhav Shah** is pursuing the Ph.D. program in the Department of English at M.L. Sukhadia University, Udaipur.



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Man is
least himself
when
he talks
in his
own person.
Give him
a mask,
and
he will
tell you
the truth.

Oscar Wilde

ISSN 0972-611X