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Special Section on

V.S. Naipaul

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EDITORIAL

A good work of art invariably leaves its indelible markings on the shifting pages of time. It may or may not offer solutions to the problems that beset mankind but its sublimity lies in the way it contributes not only to the profound understanding of the age in which we live but also in making us aware of our private fears and insecurities, our joys and hopes. In epochs of historical crisis, when the world seems to be divided into hostile ideological camps, it compels us to emerge from the ivory tower of passivity and inertia to ponder over the principles and assumptions which make our private faces encroach upon public places in search of panaceas. The sublimity of such time-honoured imprints is further affirmed through subsequent revaluations and reconsiderations by succeeding generations who visualise and discover in these paradigms of the essential human condition, the relevance of every living idea that is dynamic, and the significance of every precise emotion which tends towards intellectual formulation. What is, therefore, needed is an effective forum which can function as a repository for a coherent system of thoughts and ideas. I strongly believe that in addressing specific issues and concerns central to the human predicament, *Re-Markings* will play a seminal role. The avowed purpose of the present endeavour is to create a climate of opinion congenial to critical inquiry and intellectual debate.

The Inaugural issue of *Re-Markings* offers a panoramic view of the kaleidoscopic range and variety of incisive critical response to British, American, African, Canadian and Indian literatures. It is perhaps a happy coincidence that through this amazing spectrum of diversity runs a unifying thread of issue-specific analysis and treatment of literary discourses which deal not only with the nuances of human predicament and suffering in a hostile world but also with the possibilities of evolving strategies for resistance and survival.

In the current issue of *Re-Markings* a Special Section has been devoted to V.S. Naipaul, the great chronicler of the Indian diaspora who loves to remain in perpetual controversy. Fifteen years ago, in the July 5-11 issue of the

Illustrated Weekly of India, Pritish Nandy, the then Editor of the *Weekly*, had hailed V.S. Naipaul as 'the world's greatest living author.' Irked by what seemed to me to be an unqualified lavish praise I had, unhesitatingly, dispatched a letter to Pritish which he, very sportingly, published in the August 2-8 issue of the *Weekly*. In the letter I had drawn the Editor's attention to the spirit behind Hamlet's advice to Polonius : 'Use every man after his desert and who shall 'scape whipping ? Use them after your own honour and dignity – the less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty'. I had pointed out that it was "gracious indeed that such praise be heaped on a writer of Indian origin whose myopic vision observes nothing in this vast and complex country except the ruins of a 'wounded civilization' shaded by an 'area of darkness'." Now that Naipaul has enhanced his celebrity status with the coveted Nobel Prize for literature one can only gracefully say "congratulations, Mr. Naipaul !" Despite his overtly critical attitude towards the Indian subcontinent, Naipaul will continue to remain in the news and attract the attention of critics for being able to reconfigure reality exclusively on his own terms, a fact quite apparent from the write-ups which appear in this issue of *Re-Markings*.

Special Sections based on specific events, issues and themes will be a regular feature of *Re-Markings.* Besides assuring a durable shelf-life, such specificity will make the journal a useful guide to the frontiers of human experience. I humbly hope that the academic fraternity in India and elsewhere will warmly welcome this enterprise and contribute towards its growth with the sunshine of thought and breath of life. As the *Gita* says: "Every surface derives its soil from the depths even as every shadow reflects the nature of the substance," I am optimistic that *Re-Markings* will find effective sustenance in what it has to offer.

Nibir K. Ghosh
Chief Editor

TOWARDS A FEMINIST PROXEMICS: KAMALA MARKANDAYA'S *POSSESSION*

Pramod K. Nayar

Kamala Markandaya's *Possession* (1967) is essentially a novel about a woman's reconfiguration of space. "Space", as thinkers like Henri Lefebvre and Doreen Massey, among others have demonstrated, is socially constructed through a network of relationships and social practices. As Massey puts it: "Seeing space as a moment in the intersection of configured social relations...means that it cannot be seen as static" (Massey: 265). *Possession*, set temporally in the 1949-1954 period, is geographically wide-ranging: India (and within India, Madras, down to a tiny village in Tamil Nadu), England, several European countries and the United States of America. In this essay I shall argue how the woman's control, the reordering of relationships and the contestatory/conflictual eddies of interpersonal relationships alter space(s). The premise here, following Massey's work, is that relationships in *Possession* are always primarily spatial. And, as a corollary, space is constituted by these relationships.[1]

There are two aspects of this gendered social organisation of space: (a) entrances and exits (or points of arrival and departure) in specific geographical/spatial locations (b) proxemical eddies.[2] Together the two provide an interesting mode of reading Markandaya's novel.

Entrances and Exits

The entire plot of *Possession* is narrated by Anasuya. The novel deals with Caroline Bell's "possession" of Valmiki. Their relationship, initially that of rich patron-poor artist, modulates slowly into a love affair. The novel deals with this relationship as it occurs over several geographical territories and locations. The novel begins with a spatial movement. Caroline's entry into India is literally and symbolically an

entry into a new space. Caroline tells Anasuya that she would like to visit an Indian village, and taste local liquor (2, 5). Upon arrival, Caroline immediately re-arranges the space of the village.

And the novel's central theme -- of spatial reconfiguration through interpersonal relationships -- begins. Caroline "chases" the locals away and "with imperious efficiency...ensured her own privacy" (7). Caroline has thus rearranged the space of the Indian village in accordance with her own needs and interests. The use of "imperious" suggests the sense of imperial control over space. Anasuya, then, is unable to locate Caroline. She is informed that Caroline has gone to another place. Anasuya's query to the villager upon receiving this information about Caroline is particularly illustrative: " 'What do you think she is - a tourist?' " (7), suggesting that Caroline is not supposed to go wandering around. She is supposed to place herself where the (Indian) villager deems fit. Caroline subverts this and creates her own space. The central theme has been anticipated and inaugurated here with Caroline's spatial act.

Caroline then "discovers" Valmiki in the "semi-wildness" (9) and is fascinated by his art. Her choice and decision is clear, and she states it. Interestingly her actual statement is an intended spatial displacement of Valmiki. Further, it also means that Valmiki would be displaced from his family, a double reorganisation. Caroline says: "He must come away with us now, at once...To Paris. Either Paris or London" (10). The imperiousness of Caroline's subversion of space and relationships is noted by Anasuya. Anasuya thinks: "There was not even a pause to consider whether he [Valmiki] would like to or not" (10). Caroline stays back to convince the villagers regarding Valmiki's "necessary" displacement to England. The woman's power to reorganise is nowhere clearer in *Possession* than in this description. The narrator, after leaving Caroline in the village, returns after some days. And she finds that Caroline has reorganised practically the entire village. Anasuya writes: “So I was not really surprised to find Caroline parked in the headman's house -- a bricks-and-mortar structure, the only one of its kind in the village -- while he and his family camped in a hut. The headman's wife sent in cooked meals. A maid and a washerwoman waited on her...”(14).

Caroline is thus truly imperial in her spatial behaviour. She has occupied the headman's house, and her "cossets and comforts" (14) like meals and washing orders others' lives. Anasuya recognises this: "She was supremely confident, born and brought up to be so, with as little thought of fallibility as a colonial in the first flush of empire" (15). The effect of Valmiki is also described in spatial terms: he sits apart from his family members, and in line with Caroline and Anasuya, thus suggesting a subtle reorganisation of space and relationships (17).

Later, pursuing her mission to take Valmiki to Europe, Caroline accompanies Anasuya and Valmiki to meet the Swamy. They journey over rough terrain (23-4). When they arrive at the cave where Valmiki's "gods" reside, the situation changes. Valmiki prevents Caroline's entry into the cave. Valmiki's attitude to the cave - "a blend between reverence and a jealous possessiveness" comes to the fore. Anasuya writes: "She [Caroline] strode forward; and the boy stopped dead, barring her way" (25). Then the Swamy tells Valmiki, "Let her pass. There is no reason why you should stop her" (25). Thus Caroline enters even the holiest (at least for Valmiki) of spaces. Her conquest of Indian space, albeit sanctioned by the Swamy, is complete.

After travelling in Switzerland and other places Caroline and Valimiki return "home" to England in 1951. From this point, Markandaya's novel shifts focus from entrances and exits (though these also occur) to proxemical operations.

Proxemics

Caroline's ability to reconfigure and manipulate space through her sheer bodily presence is suggested on the very first page of the novel. Anasuya, entering a room full of people notices that people inevitably gravitate towards Caroline and arrange themselves around her (1). This is simply an anticipation of Caroline's mastery over space. When Caroline and Valmiki arrive in England he is completely her "possession". However, initially, Caroline orders space to suit his needs and talents. Anasuya is surprised at the locality that Caroline chooses to live in: "Silvertown, E., was not the sort of district one associated with Caroline" (42). Then she discovers the reason for Caroline's choice: "Caroline had chosen the district because

she felt the boy would be happier in it" (42). However, despite all these attempts, Anasuya feels that the situation does not really favour Valmiki. This is again described in spatial terms: "[Caroline] could yet not perceive these surroundings might make him [Valmiki] uneasy" (43). Showing the narrator around the house, Caroline complains that the cook (another Indian) takes up "so much room" (43). To Anasuya's query "how much", Caroline replies: "One. One room" (43). It turns out, however, that Caroline is not as constrained for space as she suggests (44). Then comes Caroline's aggressive proxemics. Anasuya writes: "Valmiki was out, his room was empty. It seemed an intrusion to enter, but Caroline walked in without qualms. I followed" (46). Caroline, who had ensured her privacy in India (as we have already seen), does not respect the Indian's private space in her English house. Her role as Valmiki's patron apparently gives her right of movement in(to) his room.

And, as though the forced displacement of Valmiki from India to England is not enough, Caroline speaks of yet more displacement and travel:

> *He might have to exhibit abroad to get really known - France, America, perhaps Italy...besides there's all the experience, he won't get it all from London (68)*

At this point Anasuya comments:

> *There was the faintest emphasis on the word 'London', as if it were a little parochial to think everything sprang from there, which marked the difference between Caroline and the memsahibs who had queened it over India to whom everything did. Or perhaps it was new post-war thinking. (68)*

There are two other women who seek to reconfigure space through relationships: Ellie (Caroline's help) and Mrs. Peabody (Caroline's housekeeper). Mrs. Peabody actually likes Indians (once more this is attributed to space : Gandhi had lived near Mrs. Peabody’s house, 80). She therefore invites Valmiki to her house, and Valmiki refuses. Anusuya reports her thoughts :

> *It was an honour for anyone who wasn”t English to be asked to Sunday dinner by anyone who was; and its decline she treated as a national insult…for*

> *Englishmen in the castles do not lightly let down the drawbridge…(80-81)*

The incident suggests several themes. It is not simply the English racial consciousness that enables Caroline to circumscribe spaces and peoples' movements in them. Race intersects with class, and Caroline also has the privilege of her class associated with her, (she is Lady Caroline Bell) and the two together enable her to modify space. Mrs. Peabody, who does not belong to such an elite, moneyed background is unable to "enforce" spatial behaviour, and Valmiki refuses her invitation. Anasuya comments: "Also, he [Valmiki] occupied no social niche as far as she [Mrs. Peabody] was concerned, inhabiting a kind of limbo, or utopia...where classlessness was the order" (80). The questions to be asked are: would Mrs. Peabody have invited Valmiki if he was a rich Indian (like the other Indian character, Jumbo, who is a Prince)? Markandaya's suggestion, articulated in Anasuya's comments quoted above, is that perhaps not, since if Valmiki were rich then Mrs. Peabody would not be able to patronise him.[3] A further question would be whether Caroline herself would have been able to patronise Valmiki.[4]

The first major threat to Caroline's organisation of Valmiki's space occurs in the form of Ellie. Valimiki after the discovery of Ellie's horrific past (the tortures in the concentration camp) is full of sympathy for her. This has enormous significance for all the characters in the novel. To begin with, Ellie is a truly dispossessed woman. She has, as Anasuya points out, "no parents, no state, no passport, no papers, none of those hollow stacking blocks on which the acceptable social being is built" (72). The absence of papers or state is a symbol of Ellie's lack of location. Valmiki's relationship with Ellie, when both the displaced (Valmiki) and dispossessed (Ellie) are beneficiaries of Caroline's generosity is a literal subversion of Caroline's and England's space. Caroline's control over relationships and space (indicated by the fact that she forbids Ellie's association with the Indian cook, and their trips into London, 81), with the separate rooms, and the sanctioned relationship is subverted when Ellie and Valmiki have an affair under Caroline's roof. Valmiki and Ellie redraw boundaries - spatial and proxemical.

Caroline's circumscription of space and relationships is never clearer than in the party-exhibition scene. Caroline enters, "leading by the hand Valmiki" (107) - itself an interesting proxemical set up. Anasuya notes that the "room was suddenly full, and swirls and eddies began to form around the gorgeous and still cohering triptych"(108. The third member of the triptych is Valmiki's pet monkey). The reference to a "cohering" group suggests the sense of togetherness of a relationship that is still "close". Then comes a particularly illuminating passage. Anasuya notes: “I looked round for Ellie, but there was no sign of her. Indeed with her skill in effacement she would not have been easy to spot in the crush, though her pallid appearance could usually be counted on to create a rift in any glossy social fabric, which, smoothly repaired as it would undoubtedly be, I felt. I would have noticed” (108).

The reference here is to the ability of people to disrupt and reform spaces and relationships around them, by either being a dissonant component or excising the unwanted. The "swirls and eddies" are orchestrated by Caroline: "Caroline, powerful maestro, was directing the stream..." (110). It is then that the narrator notices the actual proxemics of Caroline and Valmiki: “I saw her white arm encircle him, holding him as if he were hers; and then memory stirred, and I remembered this was just how she had held him long ago when he was a boy, and she was establishing her claim to him as plainly as if flag in hand she were registering property rights.”(111).

Immediately after noticing this, Anasuya meets Ellie. In response to Anasuya's query regarding her absence from the party, Ellie replies: "I was in my room...I did not feel well...I had to lie down, Lady Caroline said to do so" (111). Thus Caroline has actually ordered Ellie to restrict her movements and her location to her room. Soon after this Anasuya discovers that Ellie is pregnant with Valmiki's child. Anasuya thinks of their new situation in purely spatial terms: "for months they had been thrown together, with opportunities for intimacy normally open only to the owners of elusive secluded flats" (115). The emphasis on spatial privacy and the need for the same for the growth of a relationship is gestured at in this comment. What is interesting is that the comment about space and the

relationship refers to a relationship not approved by Caroline-as-owner-of-the-space. The relationship reconfigures space, it destroys the spatial arrangements that Caroline had planned: for Valmiki visits Ellie's room. Eventually Caroline discovers this relationship and Ellie's pregnancy. And then she begins another set of machinations calculated to effect Ellie's exit from the house and Valmiki's life. Here is the scene where Caroline's proxemics work towards such a reconfiguration of relationships and space. Caroline has suggested that Valmiki may have to travel and exhibit his paintings in different countries.

> *'Will you be going away?' said Ellie, her downcast eyes at last open with question, 'leaving England? When? Soon? For how long?'*
>
> *'Dear Ellie, so impetuous!' Caroline's cold gaze swept over the insipid little Jewess who held Valmiki with her weakness and her swelling belly at least as securely as she herself did with her power and her influence, the triumphant consummation of a long joined sweated ambitious endeavour.*
>
> *'Dear Ellie, so impatient. Of course Val must exhibit as widely as he can...'*
>
> *Ellie the unworldly shrank and dwindled, reduced to size...now she was back in the restricted sphere inhabited by a nobody. (122)*

Markandaya's description of the change in power relations, and Caroline's attempts to reorganise relationships is completely spatial when she describes the shrinking of Ellie's world into a "restricted sphere". The excision of Ellie from the world of Caroline and Valmiki is underway. Anasuya again notes the way in which Caroline holds Valmiki's arm "affectionately, proprietorially", taking care to mention that she [Caroline] had "discovered him in a cave...Hideously bare and uncomfortable" (125). Thus the contrast between Valmiki's former dwelling and present comfortable residence in Caroline's house and under Caroline's patronage is emphasised when Caroline specifically highlights Valmiki's former living space.

Anasuya then watches Caroline dance with Valmiki and thinks: "the need to be close must have become very

pressing" (131). Later that night Anasuya realises how effectively Ellie has been cut out from these lives. Valmiki who used to visit Ellie now has different spaces to go to: “A tousled Ellie let us in, and must have heard, with greater clarity and anguish than I did, the deep snores from Jumbo downstairs, mingling with, later, the intoxicated cries and sighs of Caroline and Valmiki's love-making”(131).

Here Caroline's proxemics is complete. Spatial reorganisation and sleeping arrangements and the eddies of relationships are all now in Caroline's favour. Ellie begins to be left alone in the house (133), and is no more a constituent of Caroline's "curious ménage" (132). Eventually, and expectedly, Ellie leaves the house itself (135). Slowly Valmiki discovers that Ellie is not coming back. Worse, no one knows where she is (148). Ellie has literally no space, no location, though Caroline claims that Ellie has gone back to her people (156-7).

Later there are discussions of numerous places Caroline and Valmiki travel through (182-4). Upon return Caroline in an unconscious exhibition of the effects of her deliberate proxemics shows Anasuya her (and Valmiki's) new house. Anasuya is actually shown their bedroom, much to her surprise: “The bed was a double one, two pillows to each side, twin tables for the porphyry lamps. Caroline had not anticipated my glance, nor did she notice it. She simply showed me their room, their bed: a commonplace arrangement, beyond comment from long establishment”(185).

For Anasuya this spatial arrangement made public is an admission of Caroline and Valmiki's relationship. Like at other moments, it is space that is made out of relationships. As a sort of clinching argument, hanging over the bed is Valmiki's portrait of a nude Caroline (185). Anasuya then also discovers that the single people who constituted the fringes of the Caroline-Valmiki circle have slowly disappeared and been replaced by couples. As she puts it: even if Caroline had not "deliberately contrived this pattern...she certainly acquiesced in it" (187).

A temporary lapse occurs when Caroline introduces Valmiki to Annabel ("one day [Caroline] decided that Valmiki was not seeing enough people of his own age", 187). At a party

Caroline (and Anasuya) notice the manner in which Valmiki behaves with Annabel (191). When it becomes very obvious that there is a distinct sexual tension between Annabel and Valmiki ("their exchanges were alive with sexual overtones", 191) Caroline decides to act. Caroline engineers a blackout. The lights go out and the music and dancing stops. When Valmiki offers to go and find some fuse wire to repair the problem, Caroline announces very clearly: "My dears, the party is over" (192). Over a period of time Anasuya notices that Annabel is no longer present at Caroline's parties (192). Thus the physical exclusion from certain spaces is always an attempt to break up relationships.

However, this circumscription of Annabel's (and Valmiki's) space by Caroline has unexpected results. One day Anasuya returning to her flat discovers Annabel and Valmiki making love there (194-5). With this Valmiki and Annabel have quietly subverted Caroline's monitoring of their relationship by finding an alternative space. However, what is interesting is that Valimiki continues to stay with Caroline, and meets Annabel on the sly. Anasuya notes that "Caroline and Valmiki continued to sleep in the same bed at night. By day it was Valmiki and Annabel...Caroline was old enough to accept the perverse involution of this arrangement..." (199). Later this develops into a full-fledged geographical rebellion. Valmiki moves out of Caroline's house and begins to live with Annabel in a poor, really squalid place (199-200). And then Caroline strikes.

Valmiki and Annabel are invited to Caroline's house, as is Anasuya. One notes that Caroline is orchestrating space first: she wants them in her house, her space, when the battle for Valmiki takes place. Annabel, triumphant "with the knowledge of having dispossessed a rival" (203), is unaware of what is in store. Caroline, however, is not in full control - she is angry, since [Anasuya believes] "it could not have been easy, finding herself alone despite all her power" (204). Then Caroline plays her trump card - Ellie. She reveals that Ellie, pregnant with Valmiki's child, has killed herself, and even produces a newspaper clipping to prove her story. Valmiki is devastated, and Annabel is shocked at his callousness in letting Ellie go away (205-6). As a result the furious Annabel leaves Valmiki - and walks out of Caroline's house (Valmiki is still there, within the space of Caroline's

house). Caroline has succeeded, and Anasuya's comment regarding another Caroline victory is again spatial-cartographic: "[Caroline had] wiped Annabel off the map" (224). Valmiki, ironically, is left behind in Caroline's house -- the one space he does not want to inhabit! -- when Annabel leaves. In a sense, Annabel leaves because Ellie left.

The desolate Valmiki returns to India. And then, the indefatigable Caroline also returns to India -- hoping to re-acquire Valmiki. Caroline, in her conversations with Anasuya, keeps referring to the "wildness" to which Valmiki has returned (224, 225, 226, 228). Trying to persuade Valmiki to return with her to England, she argues that he is wasting his time and talent in the wildness. After a prolonged discussion, the Swamy responds to Caroline's comments on the "wildness": "even this wasteland may have something to show, other than what you have seen" (228). The concluding sections of the novel are debates about space, and on the construction of spaces through interpretation: as wastes, as spiritual, as serving a specific purpose and so on. The Swamy points out that churches and temples are built to God, but the names of their builders/creators are effaced, never remembered. To this Caroline replies: "they are seen...They are not buried in a hole in a hill in a country which has forgotten the meaning of art". The issue here is of visibility and the "interpretation" of space, where for Caroline the absence of an audience for Valmiki's art is unpardonable. Hence anything that Valmiki makes in the "wildness" has no value. Caroline is sure that the absence of an audience and the wastes would eventually depress Valmiki too. The debate and the novel concludes with Caroline's stated conviction, that Valmiki would one day return to her and England (232-3).

Possession is thus all about Caroline's attempts to resituate people and relationships around herself. The above discussions of a "feminist" proxemics and the woman's construction of space are obviously incomplete. I have suggested that one needs to pay attention to what enables Caroline to reorganise space and the gendered geographies such as the one Caroline outlines, also factor in, at least in *Possession*, class and race. A fuller discussion of Caroline's proxemics must also take into account Valmiki's spaces, issues of spirituality (since the Valmiki-Swamy relationship is

a crucial one in the novel), and Anasuya's liminality (she has access to every single space, even those under Caroline's circumscription, as we have seen in her account of Caroline and Valmiki's bedroom).

Thus what is indisputable, as I hope I have demonstrated, is the fact that Caroline's proxemics transforms spaces in a manner that reverses established hierarchies of "masculinist" space. Though it may not necessarily indicate a "feminist" geographical practice (since Markandaya shows Caroline as dependent upon Valmiki), Caroline's proxemics is definitely a move towards such a practice.

NOTES

[1]While the male organisation of space is also important, I believe that *Possession* underlines the woman's ordering of space. Hence Valmiki's spaces are not analysed here, except in terms of how Caroline (or other women) impinge upon it.

[2]Proxemics is the ordering of space through the body, where the body is itself the technology of spacing. See Heidi Nast and Steve Pile, *Places through the Body,* especially pp. 407-410.

[3]It must be noted that Anasuya herself does not see Caroline's attitude as "patronage" (82).

[4]Caroline herself, however, does not pay much attention to upper class Indians, as her treatment of Jumbo suggests.

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❖

IN A FRAME OF MANY REFERENCES : DAPHNE MARLATT

Anisur Rahman

Third person could be anyone when it comes to that "The Difference Three Makes : A Narrative" -- Daphne Marlatt

In her first book entitled *In Frames of a Story* (1968) which alternates between prose and poetry, Daphne Marlatt makes a metaphoric use of a Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale of the Snow Queen to express her own impelling need to break away from the frames imposed by the stereotyped establishment.. As Marlatt went ahead experiencing and experimenting with a life and art intriguingly of her own type,[1] she offered many frames of references to herself as also to her readers. Her English parentage, association with various sites (Australia, Malayasia, England, America, Canada), some extremely consequential publications (*Tish, Periodics, Tessera, The Calipano Review, Island),* commitment to feminism and theory, contrasting experiments with language and form, and discordant experiences of life make her eminently suitable for a close critical scrutiny. This paper makes an attempt to show that the experience of migration and exposure to locations and predicaments, both personal and communal, become the source of vital creative expression for her. It further asserts that in expressing this predicament she makes two kinds of major appropriations: first, her language and form re-configurate themselves to new usage, and second, her gender affords her an awareness of an entirely new kind.

With several shifts of location and a variety of experiences,[2] Daphne Marlatt's engagement with art has been one of major consequences ever since the publication of her first book. The re-presentations of her locations, being essentially non-traditional in nature, are more phenomenological than dramatic or plain narrative. They underline the observer's perception of the very nature of the location and its bearing

on her. Since the location and the perceiver unite together, their individual bearings express themselves upon each other in intimate terms. The locations ultimately turn into metaphors for the problematic of her own growth.

In her works *Steveston* (1974) and *Steveston Recollected* (1975), her perceptions of Vancouver's Japanese-Canadian fishing community, its history, its people, its cannery, and especially its river come out well insofar as her multi-layered position as a writer, an oral historian, and the mover of a project is concerned. In an interview with Brenda Carr she speaks of the marked absence of women in the communal life of Steveston as they are either home, or working in the cannery. This woman, however, acquires a seminal position in that hospital poem where she is portrayed giving birth to a life or dying herself in the process. This made Marlatt perceive birth and death as interdependent metaphors and in the same manner the movement of the river into the sea as "a movement into the invisible that had to do with birthing and dying" (1991:103). She further explains that the figure/ground reversal is of immense fascination to her as this mediates the issue of the background and the foreground, and in consequence, also brings into focus the essential question involved in the feminist discourse. In this process of discovering a place and a people, she discovers herself and imparts an autobiographical status to her works in general. 'But to get back to your question about the autobiographical,' she said to Carr, 'yes, the voice in most of my work is subjective and individual rather than universal. It is marked by my gender as well as my history, class, national identity, race, all those things.' (1991:103). Explaining this stance further she refers to *How Hug a Stone* (1983) where she is a woman in a foreign country and yet the country is not foreign to her:

> *There's that twist running through it, that I'm claiming it and, at the same time, feeling very alienated from it, which is probably the classic emigrant position towards the country of origin….So, there's this constant fracturing, just as there is in the mother/daughter duality, both a daughter and a mother at the same time, the no-longer English mother of a Canadian son who is fascinated by the foreignness of the English. A universal voice can't*

> *admit this kind of fracturing, or these kinds of differences. The universal wants to pretend difference doesn't exist' (1991;103).*

Her other works *Zocalo* (1977), *In the Month of Hungry Ghosts* (1979) *What Matters* (1980), *How Hug a Stone* (1983) and *Ana Historic* (1988) bring out her association with various locations and address the question of growing in or outgrowing a predicament. *Zocalo* is a fictional re-enactment of her Mexican trip with her lover which underlines cultural and gender differences. The letters and poems *In the Month of Hungry Ghosts* takes her back to her Malaysian memory of colonial domination. *What Matters* does not only consider her double re-turn to Vancouver from Wisconsin after her divorce, it also underlines her shifting perspective on her poetics. Similarly, *How Hug a Stone* recounts her journey to England where she concentrates on the speech patterns of the people and through this tries to re-locate her female stance.[3] *Ana Historic* is an attempt at re-creating a woman's history which Pamela Banting rightly considers to be an answer to the question of:

> *how to grow a past, how to grow (in) a western city, how to grow a writer, a lover….how to write a book about an historical woman, a contemporary woman, and the relationships among women, when the traces of women's history have been obliterated, and the official version, that is men's history, is a narrative of subjection, exploitation and domination' (1991:123).*

The book underlines the question of the self versus the other and in this process addresses the issues, marked by Heather Zwicker, of 'nation, sexuality, and race' (1999:161). This comes up through the story of three immigrant women characters narrated by Annie who while doing a historical research for her husband finds two short references to one Mrs. Richards who comes to Vancouver to teach in a school in 1873.[4] Considering how Mrs. Richards' life is marginalized, Marlatt imagines and reconstructs the life of Ana Richards. While the story moves on a simple line, the narrative has layers under layers of concealed meaning referred to above. In order to belong, Marlatt, like her character, imagines that she actually belongs to a time and

place and blurs, thereby, the distinctions between then and now, there and here, the native and the immigrant.

One reading that stands out clearly through this assessment is that Marlatt's growth is a way of outgrowing notions about history, race, gender, and language. Apart from her exposure to a variety of locations and its attendant issues, she has been consistently locating and re-locating her poetics from one composition to another. Her association with the *Tish* writers (critic Warren Tallman, playwright Carol Bolt, and poets David Cull, Red Lane, Robert Hogg, and Lionel Kearns), the impact of its poet-editors (Frank Davey, George Bowering, Fred Wah, David Dawson, and James Reid), the Black Mountain poets (Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan and Charles Olson), and her discovery of H.D., combined together in complex ways to give her a poetics of her own which obliterated the distinction between prose and poetry, the prose narrative and the poetic narrative, the short and the long line, the formal and the informal, the grammatical and the non-grammatical.

Language, one of Marlatt's essential concerns, has been under her constant scrutiny and significant appropriations. It is remarkable that she does not compose programmed poetry or prose on a traditional line. She conceives and punctuates her long, continuous, and unending lines with care, executes images with great precision, and imparts the whole a kind of appeal which is traditionally associated with poetry. Reversing this order, her words are also splashed over a page as units and the qualities of the syntax are exploited to contain the burden of the experience. She allows the language itself to be the creator of the poem, a kind of auto-reflexive action that she assigns to it. Words appearing in a community of words, and those in isolation, assume different roles and both, in the given body of a text, are as virile as the experience intended to be represented. While correcting "a false proposition" about the *Tish* poets as "a collection of supercilious academic wimps" Warren Tallman said that "Daphne Marlatt, from Nowhere Malaysia, thought Vancouver and the way people talked around UBC entirely too strange" (1991:115). In view of this correction one tends to think that the way words behave has been Marlatt's major concern at every stage. She explained to

Brenda Carr her position with regard to the acquisition of meaning and treatment to words in clear terms:

> *The question is, how to get a multi-valency of meaning based on equivalency without losing meaning altogether? Meaning is so rooted in current usage, which itself is so freighted with patriarchal value. I can't ignore that, it's a given. But I can work to subvert it, to undermine it, and that's where all the different kinds of wordplay come into effect, from deconstructing words to inventing new ones, to using etymology as another variant on meaning. People seem to misunderstand my use of etymology and accuse it of being a validation of "the true literal meaning" of the word. That's very far from what I'm doing which is much more playful than that. It's a way of calling up an absolutely departed from or an ignored and forgotten meaning and recycling it as a variant slant on, a new fracture of, the current meaning which after all still stands, though it is now no longer dominant. It's a form of polysemy. (1991:104)*

This statement clearly underlines her remarkable ability to theorize about the nature of words and the role they play in the creation of a meaning. This has kept her engaged consistently and turned her into an innovative poet-theoretician.

It is essentially this innovative spirit that made Raymond Souster include fifteen of Marlatt's poems in *New Waves Canada* (1968), an anthology of the most exciting Canadian poetry written during the 60s. Later, her association with *Perodics* and *Tish* brought her still more closer to the issues concerning language, especially the gender-marked language and its theory. *Tessera* afforded her yet another opportunity to associate with the Quebec feminist writers like Nicole Brossard and Louky Bersianik and work on the potential English-French language-mixing and create polyphonic texts. At another remove, an interesting example of maneuvering the language may be seen in *Touch to My Tongue* where the distinction between, what Marlatt calls "essaying" and "poeming" is blurred. It is further an example of the potential of the gender-marked language and more precisely, the erotics of language. It is an effort at languaging

anew, like Adrienne Rich, the human relationship which in this case is one of lesbian relationship. In her "musing with mothertongue" which is read both as prose and poetry, she refers to a woman writer's position as "the double edge where she has always lived, between the already spoken and the unspeakable, sense and non-sense" (1984:48). The epigraph to *Touch to My Tongue* from H.D.—"The brain and the womb are both centers of consciousness, equally important"—spell out her intention to re-define the woman stance. In the very first of the fourteen poems/compositions entitled "this place full of contradiction" we may be able to mark her intention:

> *a confusion of times if not of place, though you understood when I said no not the Danish Tearoom--the Indonesian or Indian, was in fact that place of warm walls, a comfortable tarot deck even the lamps pick up your glow, … it's Sappho I said, on the radio, always we meet original, blind of direction, astonished your hand covers mine walking lowtide strands of Colaba, the lighthouse, Mumbai meaning great mother, you wearing your irish drover's cap and waiting alive in the glow while i come up worrying danish and curry, this place full of contradiction--you know, you knew, it was one place i meant. (1991:185).*

The deftly punctuated and seemingly prose-like lines are closely associated with references to time and place from a woman's perspective. It is an effort at identifying a place in a throng of places, a fate in a conglomeration of fates. It is a way of resolving the contradiction supposed to be embodied in the place itself where one seeks one's sustenance. It emphasizes the warmth of relationship required to sustain the two which does not recognize the barriers of either time or place. In the next composition "houseless" she tries to find a space rather than a place for herself and expresses her female joy in an association with her own kind:

> *i'm afraid, you, are you? out in the wintry air, the watery sun welling close behind your soldiers i am following , the already known symmetry of your body, its radiant, bow woman arched over me, integrity straight as an arrow.blind with joy say oh no, thinking, how could fear with you?…creatures of*

> *ecstasy, we have risen drenched from our own wet grasses, reeds, sea, turned out, turned inside out, beside ourselves, we are the tide swelling, we are the continent draining, deep and forever into each other. (1991:186)*

As one moves along the units of this composition varied references come in like those to Durga, as both the unapproachable and the world mother (*jagad-Amba*), Jade as a derogatory term for women, Persephone and Demeter reflecting upon the bond between daughter (kore, maiden) and mother (De-meter, earth mother), *dhei* (the Indo-European root of 'female' meaning 'to suckle' diversified into *fetus*--offspring that sucks-- , *fellatio*--sucking—and, *felix*—fruitful, happy), old Norse *losti* (sexual desire), Greek *lilaiesthai* (to yearn), Sanskrit *lasati* (he yearns, he plays), old Norse *belo* (bright), *bleikr* (shinning), 'gall' referring to Indo-European *ghel* (to shine), Germanic *gelwaz* (yellow), Greek *khole* (bile), Germanic *gladaz* (glad), *glasam* (glaze) and Middle Dutch *gilstern* (shine) and Old English *gleo* (glee). Throughout the compositions Marlatt tries to identify who the women may be outside the patriarchal culture. It is a question of re-locating oneself for which the dominant modes of perception and linguistic modes would be inappropriate and insufficient. The long poem may, therefore, be taken as a way of exploring space for oneself and imparting the confidence to live on.

Examples in variety of poetic and linguistic apprehensions abound in Marlatt. In a different order of poems, excerpts from which are quoted below, her language acquires remarkable precision. Words stand in isolation and they dramatize a situation:

1. *park (your) dream*
   never stationary. Was
   from the first rolling down
   hill
   even in white
   despite
   words ("Stages of Paradise,
   that pleasure park")

2. *sun finds you two*
   curved

shells on your bed
in a deep
white you're tide
carved
only the
hull of your push. ("for k. d,")

3. *iv*

unspoken his
head of
stars stares
a head
that lie that eyes
suffice
that we shd kiss & make
up he sd before
driving to
sleep. ("so cocksure")

4 *you saw*
her framed: her long. Bream. Skirt. Ankle-tied,
heels poised on your fire-escape. The precision
of those heels. Paused, in third position, knees
bent, one fishy sleeve out, to the door…
O the fabulous
laugh of the sea trapt in a jar (o the tearing of
water).
You are there
Bristles of the broom are there
The bones of your face are pinned
with autographs. ("Femina")

5. *words fail*
we the well-done rise to watch her crawl into an
aluminium box the height (just) of a sitting
woman head-bent, raw against (uncomfortable
we think) seclusion. ("Troubling the
Surface")

These samples drawn from various collections mark her concern for the woman, and in her own language. This concern has been ever present in Marlatt though it was only

in 1980 that she called herself a feminist and realized that the scenario was changing fast for the woman writer. Her association with *Tessera*, a journal devoted to typically postmodernist feminist writing, gave a certain fillip to it, and in the throes of all round-activity, this became her major preoccupation. By re-defining the boundaries of the literary, Marlatt brought literature close to oral history, radio, public readings, government agencies, distribution channels, as also the non-literary reader. Her text has emerged during all these years as independent re-presentations of women by creating a definite space for them as individuals. In engaging with this problem she consequently takes on the problem of expression, the tools of expression, and the modes of the narrative. She has been constantly engaged in a project of effacement—the effacement of stereotypes and stock responses concerning time, place, gender, language and literature.

NOTES

[1]George Woodcock makes a relevant point in this connection: "Liberated within an assured tradition, writers in recent years have tended to follow their own idiosyncratic courses without being dominated by the imperatives of either nationalism or conventional avant-gardism, and it would be hard to find much in common between the youngest poets in this collection—Margaret Atwood, Daphne Marlatt, Michael Ondaatje, bp Nichol, Mary di Michele, and Roo Borson—except the fact that they are Canadians. "Introduction," *The New Canadian Anthology : Poetry and Short Fiction in English.* Editor: Robert Lecker and Jack David. Nelson Canada : Ontario, P. XIX

[2]Daphne Marlatt was born in Melbourne, Australia, to English parents who had been evacuated from Penang, Malaysia in advance of the Japanese occupation. She spent six post-war years in Penang before the family moved to North Vancouver. She led an active life thereafter observing people and places. This is well borne out by her works.

[3]She went to England with her son and recorded the speech patterns of the people on her son's tape recorder which she later analyzed to her artistic advantage.

[4]The year is important as only six years ago the British North American Act had founded Canada.

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❖

LOSS AND RECOVERY: DEATH IN SANDRA LUNNON'S POETRY

Susheel Kumar Sharma

Death and birth are considered to be the only two eternal principles. Therefore, many thinkers, philosophers, poets and doctors have tried to find answers to questions related to them in various ways. If for a scientist the failure of metabolism causes death, Yamraj is the cause of death to a devout Hindu. In the *Bhagvadgita* Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that soul is immortal and it neither takes birth nor dies. But the soul needs a body to be used as an apparel. When the apparel is torn, it is changed. But, the apparel can be torn either because of accident or because of being old. The death due to aging is considered to be natural but because of other reasons it is considered unnatural. Since both natural and unnatural deaths bring sorrow, man wants an escape from them. Therefore, the Vedic sages, the Buddhist bhikkus and the Jain sadhakas pray for release or salvation or moksha or nirvana (i.e. freedom from the cycle of birth and death). Related with death is the idea of life after death. The concept of heaven and hell has been enunciated in different mythologies to describe life after death. Nay, a relationship has also been established between the two in the concepts of 'Karma', 'the holy cross', 'grace', 'mercy' and the like.

Sandra Lunnon deals with the theme of 'death' quite seriously in her maiden collection *Poetry from Different Planes*[1] as there is a reference to 'death' in fifty-one poems out of the total sixty-nine in the book. In her poems she raises and discusses several aspects concerning death viz. its nature, causes, means and methods, effect, relationship between soul and body and life after death. In this paper an effort is being made to analyse what Sandra considers to be a good life and to assess how much she has been affected and influenced by her social and cultural milieu, other literary

personalities, religion and science. Death appears to be a mystery to the poetess. Why does a person die? What are the causes of one's death? When is the time ripe for a certain person's death? Can't a person avoid his / her death? Is it a transitory phenomenon or a permanent one? Is it a solution to the problems one faces in one's life or a problem itself? These are some of the questions that have been asked and answered by Sandra Lunnon in her poems. In her small poem 'Goodbye', Sandra raises all these questions in a very subtle way:

As I look towards the sky
My tears fall, I start to cry.
I wasn't able to say goodbye.
Why did he have to die? *(p. 54)*

The last sentence of the stanza can be read in various ways laying stress on different words each time. Similarly, in 'Sitting on the Beach' the narrator asks, "Why God took you I try to understand"(p.47).

The wages of sin is death preaches *The Bible*. Sandra Lunnon accepts this dictum as such as is evident from her poem 'The Pier'. The violent death of Wyn in this poem is caused because she has led a sinful life. Because Wyn had illicit relations with so many persons, either one of her lovers or someone's wife who had been "caused a lot of strife" (p.34) seems to have punished Wyn. The poem 'The Cliff' is about extra marital relationship that has resulted in two suicides. The cause of the first suicide is the rebuff from the beloved who believed: "You were married, you had a wife, / How could you have two of us in your life?" (p.35). But, later on she realised the intensity of her love and committed suicide. Because, their love was illicit they had to die as a punishment. The reunion takes place in life after death as is evident from the lines:

They say they saw two people walk away—
They looked like us, so they say—
Walking down the beach hand in hand,
A pretty blonde girl and her tall dark
handsome man. *(p.35)*

This proves that Sandra doesn't accept the principle 'once guilty always guilty'. The poem 'Paul' is about the death of a person who is having an illicit love affair with the gamekeeper's wife. The poem evidences the fact that Sandra believes that the evildoers will meet their sad end. But, what is surprising is the fact that while the punishment comes to the male partner in the form of death, the female partner goes unpunished. It appears that Sandra is biased towards women and feels that a man is guiltier than a woman is in the case of an illicit relationship. In 'The Wife in Your Life' also it is hatred born out of illicit relationship that becomes the cause of death-- it is not violent here but is accidental. The wife is jealous of the mistress as the latter was carrying the child of her husband. The wife is quite angry and quarrelsome-- she instead of mending her own house reaches the mistress's place and "She punches [her] and knocks [her] down on the floor". (p. 80) The falling proves fatal to the pregnant mistress and she dies ("I'm floating, I must be dead/ I look down from above", ll.14-15). The fate of the male partner of this illicit relationship is not discussed in the poem. In 'Another Man's Wife' the murder takes place because of the fidelity of the wife. The husband takes no chance and shoots not only her but also the paramour dead. The instrument used to kill is a gun. The poetess seems to be suggesting that illicit love brings death. The loss is equal to both the partners. What punishment is given to the gunner is not discussed in the poem. But, the moot question whether it is right to take law in one's own hands remains unanswered. In 'David', the persona is going to be hanged because she murdered the unfaithful consort. The persona does not repent her action of taking law in her own hands. Therefore, she does not want to die and wants "to walk away and be free"(p.15). She justifies her action because the consort was full of 'deceit'. Sandra Lunnon highlights that the persona was "bitter …[and]... cold" and it was out of her jealousy that she committed the murder. Thus, Sandra wants the lovers to be faithful to each other; wants them not to take law in their own hands even in the most difficult situations and expects them to keep their cool even in the odd circumstances if they want to lead a peaceful life.

Possessiveness is considered to be a vice by Sandra. It is because of unhappiness born out of possessiveness that the

persona shoots his wife. The hatred is so strong that even the clothes of the deceased are burnt in the grate by the persona. What spurred unhappiness is not mentioned in the poem nor are mentioned the consequences of this shooting for the persona who was looking for happiness. In ‘Greed’ a murder is done by a hired killer so meticulously that no remains of the body are found even after a long time. The murdered person was wealthy and was murdered by a near relative so that the money could come to him as a legacy. The narrator did not feel any remorse throughout his life while enjoying the money but did feel it like Dr Faustus did during his last moments in Marlowe’s drama of the same name. The narrator feels that he committed only one bad deed that too because “the devil planted the seed” (p.87).

Sandra Lunnon considers faithfulness to be one of the virtues. That is why in several of her poems the faithless persons are shown to be meeting their doom. In ‘Baby, Baby’ the narrator says: “Being faithful wasn’t part of you. / You have disappeared, they haven’t got a clue. / Only I know what happened to you.” (p. 51)

Money and its related problems cause death in several of Sandra’s poems. In ‘The Track’ also a suicide occurs because of the inability to repay the loans. A murder takes place in ‘Why’ for the sake of the insurance money. The husband in this poem engages a killer to do the job. “Terrible things” are done to the narrator before murdering her with the help of a knife. Two deaths take place in ‘Love’s Last Regret’ -- one, that of the husband who has been killed for his money by his faithless wife and the other, of the wife. Sandra suggests that misery lies in store even for those people who keep bad company like faithless wives. The wife soon realizes her mistake and prepares to die by shooting herself, having written a confessional note. Thus, Sandra is suggesting that no death remains unpunished forever. In this case Sandra seems to be echoing Shakespeare who wrote, “Murder…will speak.”

Two deaths occur in ‘Jack’, one in the form of a murder and other as a suicide. The cause of the murder is a brawl over non-payment of money while the cause of the suicide is the sense of guilt:

I got used to things I had
He brought me everything, I was glad.
I guess I treated him like dirt,
I wouldn't even iron his shirt.
Jack, Jack I know I did you wrong
It's with you that I belong. (pp. 24-25)

The persona in 'Black Magic' has to face death because of her practising 'Black Magic'. Whether black magic is a prohibitive art/science has been debated for long. Dr. Faustus practised it and embraced death. But, in this poem the persona does not seem to accept his mistake; rather the motive is attributed to the people around who seem to have played the trick of arresting him by resorting to lying and deceit. But, in 'Russian Roulette', death is embraced by one of the six persons present in the poem. But, it is unlike the embracing of death by Arjuna in *The Bhagvadgita* for a cause. The exhorter, too, is unlike Krishna. Here, the cause is 'boredom', —relief is sought from it by playing a 'death game' and the exhorter is 'gin'. Sandra Lunnon is trying to hint that seeking relief in taking to wine and in dangerous games like Roulette is sheer dare-devilry, and should not be encouraged as it results in the loss of life. In another poem 'Ted' also the same problem has been discussed. In this poem it is an accidental death caused by the misfiring of "the gamekeeper's gun".

Sandra also seems to have pondered over the question if a confession of one's crimes and sins helps. For example, the female persona of the poem 'Hellbound' admits of having committed two murders, one of the lover's wife and the other of a little girl's pup. She is the cause of a third death too—that of a lover who was made the scapegoat of killing his wife. She confesses that she has "led a happy sinful life" (p.79) and "I am evil, I am twisted and I am rotten to the core/ my soul is aching and it's sore"(ll.15-16). But the confession doesn't help and she reaches hell. By going against the tenet of confession in Christianity Sandra Lunnon comes closer to the Hindu view of 'Karma', which decides one's going to hell or heaven.

If there are some persons who consider death to be a punishment there are also some who seek death. Such people believe that there is no life after death and for them death is a solution to many problems on this earth. Such

people figure in the poems like ‘The Mill’, ‘The Track’ and ‘Russian Roulette’. Since none of the persons is shown to be happy in life after death it can safely be presumed that Sandra denigrates committing suicide. In ‘The Track’ the solution to the present misery, because of heavy borrowing, has been sought through suicide. The narrator persona is ignorant of the fact that there is life beyond death. In ‘Does Anyone Care’ a person is saved from committing suicide by drowning into the sea. The persona is spotted and is saved. Because people around show a lot of love and care the persona feels that life is worth living and that the world is not as bad as it appeared to be before the suicide is attempted. Thus, Sandra suggests that embracing death is no solution to the problems one is facing. One has to change one’s attitude to face the challenges on this earth.

Sandra Lunnon believes that there are times when one doesn’t know why a particular death takes place or why a person has to die. Even the circumstances of a murder do not give any clue to that. In ‘Logo’ death takes place as a conspired murder apparently by the friends of the dead. The motive of the murder is not told to the reader. But, the murderers in the poem are hinted to be novices for the dead body could be identified not only because it was found floating between weed and reed but also because of the logo on its shirt. The identity of the murderer remains ambiguous and so does the punishment to him. The cause of two deaths in the poem ‘Sitting on the Beach’ is not clear—apparently the elder person dies because of illness but it is not a very convincing reason for the narrator. That is why the musing is there: “Why God took you I try to understand.” (p.47) A murder takes place in the poem ‘Up to No Good’. The motive, means and after-effects are not known. Death takes place in poems like ‘The Country Lane’ and ‘The Moor’ but the cause for it is not known despite a police investigation. Even the narrator’s search remains futile. Death is caused because of shooting in the poem ‘Ted’. It appears to be only a chance happening. The poem ‘Toad’ hints that Sandra believes in ‘fate’ and the dictum that ‘man proposes and God disposes’. That is why the toad couldn’t even cross the road to find its mate and was killed.

In ‘Sacrifice’ a person has been killed in the late October night by drugging and then stabbing him. The cause has not

been described except that at the time of the misdeed it appeared to be quite justified ("what we did then we thought was right", p.26). Now, the things have changed, perhaps because the morals have improved and therefore, the persona feels remorse. But the dead cannot be brought back to life.

The death of the near and dear person brings sorrow and misery to people around. Poems like 'Malcolm' and 'Love's Garden' are the examples in point. What is the way out for such people? For example, if a father dies because of his misdeeds, the children have to suffer for no fault of theirs. Sandra Lunnon does not answer such questions. Nor does she suggest a way out for them. Even the good persons have to die because death is an eternal principle. The impact of death on the people around the deceased has been discussed in several of Sandra Lunnon's poems. The persona in 'If I'd Known Then' bewails the fact that she did not know enough about the deceased person when he was alive. But now after his death several new facts seem to have come to light so much so that the narrator is willing to go "to heaven for [the deceased]" (p.68). Since the persona is sure that the deceased has gone to heaven, he must have been a good person.

Sandra Lunnon believes that life does not come to an end with a person's death. Something remains and continues to generate interest in the past life too. For example, there are several poems in *Poetry from Different Planes* where the sight of death is described by the soul as an understanding witness to the scene[1]. They include poems like 'The Wife in Your Life', 'Did you Say You Love Me?' 'The Moor', 'Under the Tree', and 'Why'. All these poems indicate that for Sandra 'body' and 'soul' are two separate entities but a relationship exists between the two. The poem 'Heaven's Gate' shows that Sandra Lunnon believes in the Christian concept of life after death. The persona of this poem has "led a life/ That was not free from sin" (p.49) but reaches the gate of heaven. The gatekeeper smiles at him before checking his name in the book but once having completed his checking "He looks at [the persona] with a frown"(p.49). This clearly corroborates the persona's belief that his life on the earth was not without blemish/sin. If in Hindu mythology it is Yamaraj who is sent to take the soul along, it is the loved

ones who are sent to fetch the soul in Sandra's poems:"If you have an earthy love / In time you can come down from up above. /When their earthly life is spent /Down to get them you'll be sent." (p.11)

In 'The Track' the persona knows that there is life after death and is certain that he is not going to come back to this planet once again. 'Honeysuckle from Heaven' is a poem about impending death and the belief that there is life after death too. That the earthly love and care continue to surround the dead person, is the theme of the poem 'Sitting on the Beach'.

Sandra Lunnon believes that active life is led by some persons even after their death as they continue to take interest in the lives of people on this earth. For example, angels are sent to help the persons on the earth by those who have departed from here but who still have interests here.[2] Because they themselves cannot help they seek the intervention of the angels. Such an idea has been presented in the poem 'Guardian Angel'. Some of those who die become ghosts and visit the places of their interest. They are also seen by some people on such visits :

> *They say they saw two people walk away –*
> *They looked like us, so they say –*
> *Walking down the beach hand in hand,*
> *A pretty blonde girl and her tall dark*
> *handsome man. (p.35)*

However, Sandra Lunnon does not go into the question as to who becomes a ghost and why does one have to visit the planet again and again. She seems to have imbibed such ideas from her cultural and social milieu.

Sandra believes that life after death is not easy to be led as the memory of this life haunts the soul and keeps it active and involved. For example, 'Help Me, Help Me' is a poem in which the soul has not been able to forget the pain that the body might be feeling. Nor has it been able to overcome its love for the body. Because, the soul has not been able to free itself of the past it is fit neither to dwell up in heaven" (p.62) nor can it be free (l.21). In fact, the first poem of the book gives a fair idea of what the relationship between those

who have died and those who stay on this earth could be. It would be appropriate to reproduce the poem as such:

> *I have an open channel to those who live above*
> *Sometimes they come down and surround*
> *me with their love*
> *Some still have hearts filled with earthly pain.*
> *I put their thoughts into poems so that*
> *their feelings will on earth remain. (p.9)*

Sandra believes that it is not easy for a soul to leave this body and snap its relationship with the earth as is clear from the line: "Please relax, don't put up a fight" (p.11). The souls in 'The Moor' are cribbing for liberation. It appears that two persons in the poem were murdered and buried without performing any Christian rites. Thus, it is clear that for Sandra a Christian burial is a must for the peace of the soul. But one has to forget one's earthly associations, pains and joys before going to heaven if a joyful life is to be led there. The journey to hell is described in the following lines in the poem 'Hellbound':

> *Suddenly it's going dim.*
> *I'm in a river and I can't swim.*
> *Men in black robes are pulling me out.*
> *It's burning hot here –*
> *I'm in hell, there's no doubt. (p.79)*

In her poem 'I'll Do It Later' Sandra satirises those persons who instead of working today keep on shifting their duties on tomorrow presuming that they will remain alive while the death of any person is uncertain. Thus, by implication she means that today is very important and all duties should be carried out in the right earnest today itself. Besides discussing what leads to a miserable life in this world and after, Sandra also indicates how can one escape misery in this world. In her poem 'Meeting of Hearts' the following ways are suggested to pass a peaceful and joyful life: "Keep bright and breezy,/Be brave, /Be kind /Keep your loving heart,/For in the hearts of those who love you / We will never be apart." (p.22)

Thus, Sandra Lunnon suggests that death is inevitable but it is no solution for the miseries of this world. She wants people to lead a pure life, as it will bring happiness not only in this life but also is the life after death.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1]Sandra Lunnon, *Poetry from Different Planes* (London: Minerva, 1999 [1998]). Page/line numbers along with quotations in the text refer to this edition of the book.

[2]Dr. Raymond A Moody in *Life After Life* reports: “Quite a few have told me that at some point while they were dying -- sometimes early in the experience, sometimes only after other events had taken place -- they became aware of the presence of other spiritual beings in their vicinity, beings who apparently were there to ease them through their transition into death... .” (p.55).

AUTOBIOGRAPHY: AN ACT OF ASSERTION

Sudhi Rajiv

Indian society understands a human being only by his caste. The entire behaviour of Indian society revolves around caste. Irrespective of the traits of the personality, 'caste' evokes responses, which have deep roots in Indian psyche. The mesmerizing effect of 'caste' is such that the traits of a person are submerged in the vast pool of caste-oriented traits, which completely dominate the process of understanding a human being. Caste is a highly organized social grouping and is said to have emerged from the Varana systems. Over the period of time 'caste' has completely perverted the Varana system, in fact they have become interchangeable.

Dr. Ambedkar in *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches* (1989) defined caste "as a social group having (a) belief in Hindu religion and bound by certain regulations as to (b) marriage, (c) food and (d) occupation"(158). He further explains, "A Hindu is born in a caste and dies as a member of that caste. There is no Hindu without caste, can not escape caste and being bound by caste from birth to death he becomes subject to social regulations and traditions of the caste over which he has no control" (159). The saddening and annoying part of the story is that the caste system has undermined the potential of Indian society as a whole and has not allowed human beings to grow beyond the boundaries and parameters strictly laid down and enforced firmly. The riddle of caste has marred and suppressed the talent and capacity of Indian society. Someone venturing outside the domain of caste has been ruthlessly degraded, not only mentally but also physically. The irony of the situation is that all this has sanction of religion and tremendous approval and support of society.

One wonders as to how these inequalities could have survived in such an established order where the pretext changes but the suffering continues.

The myth of inferiority and irresponsibility of the untouchables is perpetrated by the savaran class. But is it really true? For this let us examine two blazing autobiographies namely, *Jhoothan* by Omprakash Valmiki and *Akkarmashi* by Sharankumar Limbale. The critical discussions of these literary pieces would be incomplete without the historical background of the untouchables. These autobiographies are a part of the vast social, religious, economic and political background from where they emerge. The personal experiences of Valmiki and Limbale attain the magnitude of historical as well as contemporary experiences of the society as a whole. They give credence to the argument that literature based on personal experiences may lack in beauty of language or aesthetics, but they represent naked facts and bring out the caste hatred in its cruelest form.

The nature of reality for the elite and for the untouchables is different. Today the earlier definitions of these two, which were based on destiny, have changed. Today it has the connotation of an oppressor and oppressed. This change in definition has brought out a huge difference, in the way the literary world is looking at these relationships. One is armed with rights and the other is helpless. The Dalit writers of today are adding new dimensions to this oppressor/oppressed relationship in a most authentic way in creating literature of change and equality.

Dalit autobiographies spring from an oppressive experience in a hostile world. The autobiographers did not have the traditional means of identifying themselves, did not have access to education and were excluded from the surrounding society. It was only through their life that they discovered self and experience and hence the story of their life became the medium of their struggle to gain personal and political independence.

According to Cox (1989) autobiography as a form is relied upon by minorities “as the avenue by which the underprivileged selves gain entry into the established culture of writing… [and] achieve both expression for themselves

and a hearing from the cultivated society is evidence of the liberating as well as the socializing function of the convention"(3).

To me, the Dalit autobiographies were important 'microhistories' revealing lives that I knew little about and about whom history books were strangely silent. Through these autobiographies I gained access to the point of view of the dalits and started paying attention to the socio-political and ideological significance of the autobiographies.

Dalit autobiographies have revealed great political insight into the contradictions of Indian society, which have been felt as subjective experiences. These autobiographies are weapons of struggle against a hostile caste and class power. The identity that has been created is in resistance to and defiance of the savaran strategy of keeping dalits mired in powerlessness and poverty. What Butterfield (1974) says of black autobiography is true of dalit autobiographies "Every writer must struggle to discover who and what he is; but if you are not able to take who you are for granted and the social order around you seems deliberately designed to rub you out … and mock you with paradoxes of your highest hopes, then discovering who you really are takes on the dimension of epic battle with the social order. Autobiography then becomes an arsenal and a battleground" (284).

Given the social realities, the personal histories of oppression, resistance and liberation, they work ultimately for the liberation of all dalits blending the story of the autobiographer's life with the collective history of the milieu. These autobiographies reveal the self to the self, the others and serve as a political weapon "telling it like it is", communicating the problem directly without worrying about the niceties and formal rules of individual expression.

The important question for a black was, 'Who am I?' This question of identity has bothered Sharan Kumar Limbale, too. (8) His autobiography *Akkarmashi* has been knit around this question of identity. Limbale is an "Akkarmashi" or an illegitimate child born out of an illicit relationship between a savaran father and an untouchable mother. He becomes a victim of double contempt: amongst the savarans he is considered as untouchable and amongst the untouchables he is considered an "Akkarmashi".

At an early age he becomes aware of the 'difference' between his life and that of the surrounding savaran society. His schoolfellows ostracize him and he is made to sit outside his classroom. He is not allowed to even touch the shoes of his teachers as his touch may contaminate them.

He questions "I am also a Hindu by religion, I am also human. All other children can go near the idol of God, then why can't we?" (16). He describes his experiences of discrimination and the forced concept of being inferior and untouchable very vividly and comments that they were like the trash swept and thrown outside the village. Their locality had no relation with the village. Even the river had three earmarked areas for drinking water, the lowest being available to the dalits.

This realization that he is treated differently brings him to the stage where he questions not only the social order but also religion. He is surprised that the savarans "like to drink liquor of our houses but not water. They like our women but not the food cooked by them" (55).

He wonders at many like Rambap who have internalized the conditions that prescribe and predetermine their lives, and accept their predicament without blaming the savarans. The hegemonic stratification of the savarans has percolated into the untouchables and is evident from the experiences of Limbale when he falls in love with Shevanta, a girl of another caste. His grandmother beseeches him to forget her. "Mahars are very dangerous. They will cut you into pieces. Nobody is going to question them. They will rape all our women in the open. Think about it. Forget Shevanta" (46).

However, education instills self-confidence in him and he questions the social set-up. When served tea in cups and saucers kept outside a hotel for the untouchables, he and his friend decide to take action against the owner. They take that tea to the police station where the inspector stares at them for their audacity. Limbale's threat that he would go to the Chief Minister and write to the Prime Minister moves the inspector to action. They are finally able to break the "Jim Crow" laws through their mild rebellion.

The awareness of his predicament brought about by education makes his heart yearn for equality and acceptance but he finds himself in a deadlock. His anger and frustration

knows no bounds when he cannot find a room to live in because of his caste. “Should we burn this city? Such a big city and I cannot even find a small room. Every city is caste-oriented. Every house is caste-oriented. Every human being is caste-oriented. Caste has broken men from inside and devoid him of his humanity” (149). Extremely disillusioned with the system he says, “I am human. Beside the human body what else do I have? Here in this country man is recognized by his father. I have neither my father’s name, religion, caste nor am I heir to any father” (80). Following Dr. Ambedkar he rejects Hindu religion: “A God, a religion, a country that throws us out of our own village is not acceptable to us” (89) and adopts Buddhism. This desperate attempt to understand the discrimination on the basis of birth and religion has brought many dalits to the conclusion that Dr. Ambedkar had understood the socio-religious question better and they can identify themselves better with his interpretation.

This rejection is an act of empowerment forcing reconsideration of old religion revealing new possibilities for freedom from social injustice. He actively participates in movements and the Panther Party to fight for the interests of the dalits but in the end he creates a distance between himself and his caste fellows. He never takes his grandmother to his room in his hostel because she embarrasses him. He conceals his caste and lives under an assumed name in order to survive. This strategy for survival adopted by many dalits dilutes their purpose, hatred and anger weakening the effort to fight collectively for their rights.

Om Prakash Valmiki’s *Jhoothan* is an attempt not only to record a life but also to make a life. Right from birth he sees the difference in his life and the surrounding savaran society. The “Chuhadas” lived near the “Dabowali Johadi” which was used as a big “Tarat” (toilet). Pigs, dirt, dogs, naked children, daily quarrels and foul smell permeate the atmosphere in which the author is raised. Valmiki comments, “if those who call the Varna system an ideal system had to live here for two-three days, their opinion would change” (1) [Translations mine.]

His father sees education as the greatest single opportunity to escape the indignities and proscriptions of oppression but the kind of treatment, which is meted out to him in the school

make him aware of 'difference'. His classmates would study while he was ordered to sweep the school and the entire field during class hours.

Despite the passage of far-reaching statutes education is denied to him. When his father protests, headmaster Kali Ram says, "Take him away ... being a Chuhada, how dare you come to study … go away. Otherwise, I will break your bones" (16).

Malcolm X narrates a similar experience in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965). The teacher encourages the whites to strike out on their own; to do something new yet none of them had earned marks equal to him. "All [Mr. Ostrowski] could see for me was the kind of future – 'in your place' that almost all white people see for black people" (118). In the eyes of the white people he is not intelligent enough to become whatever he wants to be.

Valmiki's father protests against this shameful behaviour of the headmaster, but he is astonished by the stereotyped responses of the villagers who chastise him for aspiring to get his son educated. 'Why should you send him to school?' 'You illiterate, uncivilized people do not know how to acquire knowledge'. 'After all, he was only asked to sweep and not asked to sacrifice his thumb as has been done by Dronacharya'(17). Despite all these humiliations he gets good marks and continues his studies with sheer determination and resolve.

The prevalent practice amongst Chuhadas was to collect the leftovers. Once when his mother asks for more food from a Tyagi in the village she is admonished that she had a basketful of leftovers and is yet asking for more. "'Beware of yourself Chuhadi! Pick up your 'tokara' and get out'" (21). Valmiki could feel the pain of these words even into the present and the book gets its name from this incident.

The psyche of the child is bruised forever but still he continues his struggle to get out of this social ghettoization. Even the right to ask questions is denied. While discussing the life of Dronacharya in the class he dares to ask a question. 'Ashwathama was given flour mixed with water as milk and we drink 'mand' [Rice water after rice is separated]. Then why is there no mention about us in any of the epics, why?'

The whole class is astonished, as if he had raised an unworthy question! His teacher shouts, "'Kaliyug has really arrived … that is why an untouchable has dared to ask such a question!"' The teacher forces him to kneel down and put his head between his legs. He forgot teaching and continuously called him Chuhada making him aware of his inferiority and his separate status. He sends some students to pick a green stick from the teak tree. "'Hey … Chuhada, you dare compare yourself with Dronacharya… I will write a great epic on your back.' (34) He thrashes his exposed back. The epic is written on his back even to this day. Those desperate moments of helplessness are still visible on his back and his psyche.

Even at the time of marriage the groom had to go for 'Salami' to those savaran houses, where the bride's mother worked. They were treated like animals out of the zoo and were given clothes, utensils, some cereals etc. with the comment that "'These Chuhadas are never satisfied."' The naked hatred, humiliation and helplessness forces him to ask a question to his father, 'Is it right to go for salami?' His father looks at him lovingly and says, 'Munshji', (he lovingly addressed his son so) it was worth sending you to school … now we will break this ritual.'"' (44) Om Prakash Valmiki, perhaps had these seeds of social revolution unknowingly which later makes him question the basis of Hindu religion.

Though Hindu in principle, the Chuhadas never worship any Hindu deities. Later on when he reads the *Gita*, he finds that these scriptures are responsible for their present state. The philosophic interpretation of labour given by Krishna, 'Go on doing work and do not bother about results' is nothing but misleading for the common man. The irony of the situation is that after every chapter of the *Gita*, there is 'Mahatamya', which encourages the person to read the chapter and if he does so he would be rewarded. What contradiction!

Om Prakash Valmiki is puzzled. 'I am not even Hindu. Had I been a Hindu, then why would other Hindus hate me and discriminate against me. Why would they remind me of my low caste and inflict inferiority into my soul. I wondered why it was necessary to be a Hindu to be a good man. I have seen so much cruelty and intolerance in Hindus … Why is the Hindu so cruel towards Dalits?' (54)

Even in Richard Wright's autobiography *Black Boy* (1945) religion turns out to be a poor substitute for the hunger, terror and loneliness he experiences in his life. Like Wright, Valmiki "discover[s] a basic opposition between the realities the mind sees and the distortions of consciousness perpetrated in the name of religious truth."(15)

This thought further gets strengthened when he reads Dr. Ambedkar. It was clear that Gandhi gave the name Harijan to the untouchable to save Hindus becoming a minority in this nation. But this he did, not to bring the Harijans into the mainstream. He took care of the intents of the savaran Hindus. Many intellectuals amongst Dalits support this view. They believe that the education imparted in colleges does not make them human beings but staunch Hindus.

Om Prakash Valmiki faces many embarrassments because of his surname, and because at times he conceals his caste. A Kulkarni Brahmin girl falls in love with him thinking that 'Valmiki' means Brahmin but when she comes to know that he belongs to the schedule caste he becomes a different person for her. He is a lover fit to get married to but his 'jat', Chuhada changed everything. Centuries of hatred find a way to her heart. That day he realizes that assimilation is not only difficult but also impossible. It might take ages before it can happen in this rigid traditional Hindu society.

From the examination of the larger culture he moves not only to self-definition but also to the figuration of collective consciousness and collective life. His rejection of Hinduism and the discovery of the ideology of Ambedkar and Marx give him hope for a change and a vision of freedom.

In both books the autobiographer's awareness brings him into rebellion against the social forces, which perpetually erode the realization of the full potential of a human being. The picture that emerges from these autobiographies is charged with anger, anguish and helplessness. There is a desire for change but each autobiographer feels caged in and ultimately accepts the privileges of the middle class. The conclusion of the autobiographies is not an "ecstasy of possibility". Their situation is so complex that the autobiographer is more and more removed from the masses and a gulf exists between himself and his own people while at the same time he cannot enter the mainstream.

However, the writing of their autobiographies becomes an act of empowerment through which they create a space for themselves in which they could operate as human beings. The autobiographical form is one of the ways by which the oppressed have asserted their right to live and grow. "It is a bid for freedom, a beak of hope cracking the shell of … exploitation" (Butterfield 3) and the lies of inferiority. They succeed in re-presenting and examining the past in order to address the present and renew the terms of their struggle for future generations. It gives them a chance to gain dignity, humanity and a certain amount of freedom creating a human and liberated self. While the dalits have wrested some gains from the system they have not been given their rightful place because of the capitalistic system, which thrives on exploitation and oppression.

This painful journey through naked discrimination, cruel subjugation in the name of religion and caste, rape, physical violence has made many Dalit writers conscious about the fact that there is a deep-rooted foundation of caste hatred, which is not easy to shake.

In *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, Ambedkar notes that, "A large majority of Untouchables who have reached a capacity to think out their problem believe that one way to solve the problem of the Untouchable is for them to abandon Hinduism" (403). He further notes that, "It is usual to hear all those who feel moved by the deplorable conditions of the Untouchables unburden themselves by uttering the cry, 'We must do something for the Untouchables.' One seldom hears any of the persons interested in the problem saying, 'Let us do some thing to change the Touchable Hindu"'(3). Nothing requires to be done to the touchable. He is sound in mind, manners and morals. He is whole; there is nothing wrong with him.

But while going through *Jhoothan* and *Akkarmashi* one finds that the above observation is completely wrong. The stories narrated by Valmiki and Limbale shatter the above myth. There is an urgent need to do something, to change the touchable Hindu. How apt and visionary Dr. Ambedkar was! Yes, touchable Hindu has to change otherwise great dangers lie ahead. More and more Dalits are getting educated, acquiring knowledge and above all, acquiring the capacity to think objectively and independently. When more

and more Valmikies and Limbales will come out with their experiences, the young generation of Dalits is not going to sit quiet and tolerate. So Beware!

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THE POLEMICS OF DECOLONISATION IN NGUGI'S *WEEP NOT,CHILD* AND MEJA MWANGI'S *STRIVING FOR THE WIND*

Jaiwanti Dimri

Since the publication of Ngugi's *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) the polemics of decolonisation has gained a new impetus in the postcolonial world. A number of variables and paradigms have been offered and tested in the third-world to speed up the process of decolonisation .The third-world texts, with their equally important sub-texts, therefore need to be read with the political background in mind and the reader should adequately be informed about their contexts and subtexts as Fredrick Jameson too has cautioned: All third-world texts are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical, and in a very specific way; they are to be as what I will call national allegories….Third-World texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic, necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory.

This is very true in the context of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Weep Not, Child* [1] (1964) and Meja Mwangi's *Striving for the Wind* [2] (1990).The novel became imperative for the contemporary Kenyan writers to improvise the strategies of resistance in order to cope up with the internal forces of imperialism. Ngugi, a tireless fighter for the rights of the landless and the exploited, vividly portrays the landless native's struggle against the white settlers in *Weep Not, Child* in pre-colonial Kenya. Ngugi presents the variables adapted by the black people to regain their land and highlights the reasons as well as the circumstances that ultimately lead to their failure in a dispassionate, outwardly simplistic manner. Meja Mwangi,a compatriot of Ngugi ,who is incidentally also a

Gikuyu, has foregrounded his novel in the contemporary Kenyan situation. The novel, apart from critiquing contemporary Kenya in a comic/ironic mode, offers a most illuminating discourse on decolonisation. Mwangi's *Striving for the Wind* relates to the time after 'uhurn' i.e. freedom when the sale of large land-holdings to small peasants had raised an average Kenyan's hopes in an egalitarian society founded on a just social and economic order. But very soon the poor landholders were rendered landless by those who seemed more formidable than the erstwhile colonizers. In his earlier novels *Kill Me Quick* (1973), *Going Down River Road*(1976)and *Cockroach Dance*(1979) Mwangi had created a new fictional space for modern African urban people, but the writer's choice of a rural setup is indicative of a subsequent shift in his ideological positionality. A reading of the text and the subtext further goes on to strengthen Mwangi's bias in favour of a third world model as a pre-requisite for the establishment of an egalitarian society in Kenya. The recurrent references to India and the echoes of Gandhian philosophy in the protagonist's discourse further promote the hypothesis that the third world model corresponds with India : "In time, India had become America and slowly grown to be an obsession" (SFTW, p. 13) .

Striving for the Wind focuses on the postcolonial rural situation in Kenya where the gap between the landowners and landless labourers is widening day by day. "Selling bit by bit, they landed up landless in Kambi village struggling as labourers and village beggars."(SFTW,p. 15).The village community in Kambi village can broadly be classified into three categories. Baba Pesa , the archetypal imperialist along with his band of local mafia represents the exploitative group mercilessly engaged in the dispossession of the dispossessed. He surpasses the likes of Mr Howlands in *Weep Not, Child* in his legendary ruthlessness and shrewdness. Such 'fathers of money' are solely responsible for the annihilation of the poor farmers like Baru forming the exploited group. There is yet another group comprising God fearing, God loving creatures who do good for the sake of good thus claiming an allegiance with tradition: Mama Pesa and Mama Baru, the elderly matriarchs in both the households and Mutiso , the poor goatherd epitomises all that is adorable and invincible in African tradition and culture. The presence of such characters invariably is a

reinforcement of empirical reality, manifested in the wisdom of the ancients and the social and cultural values upheld by the traditional societies in pre-colonial Kenya.

Juda Pesa, the semi-lunatic, celebrated 'market-philosopher' as his father sardonically calls him, has been assigned the stupendous task of decolonizing the village community of Kambi. This lacklustre figure, without an iota of authority or superiority in him has been presented in marked contrast to Ngugi or Achebe's conventional pivotal heroes purposely by Mwangi as a role model best suited to guide, instruct and address the native masses about the contemporary reality. This semi-lunatic, university drop-out drunkard's discourse gradually shifts from ironic to serious mode. This peculiar narrative is typically indigenous in tone and narrative mode has been employed as the best possible strategic device. Moreover, the kind of discourse Mwangi aspired to offer here, confronted the danger of outright rejection; hence his choice of the comic/ironic mode with an inherent ambivalence in the discourse serves the desired purpose. Besides Juda, Ndege, the village lunatic and the impetuous Ruhiu have been accrued the omniscient authorial voice. The discourse moves from sanity to insanity, from nonsense to commonsense, from ridicule to comprehension to ultimately an enforced acceptance. Juda Pesa's harangue-like-discourse incorporates these kinds of variables and paradigms aimed at three different categories of people mentioned above. For Baba Pesa, the archetypal exploiter, the prying agent of oppression who is incidentally Juda's father too, Juda's discourse operates at a personal level. Words, gestures, incitement, suggestions, ridicule and finally stern action form his educated and instructive methods: "I can't help you exploit these people as I know you will" (SFTW, p. 194.) he vehemently declares towards the end. The opposition of corrupt parental or filial authority thus emerges as a plausible variable for decolonisation. Juda's twofold task is to decolonise both the exploiter and the exploited.

Mwangi's plea for the subversion of corrupt, exploitative parental authority is thus one of the variables for decolonisation. Juda voices the sentiments of a generation that was betrayed by the preceding generation: "You could have been a great man yourself," Juda Pesa said to his

father. “A leader of man and an example to the rest of us ….You chose instead the path of corruption in pursuit of wealth” (SFTW, p. 57).

Chinua Achebe in *Anthill of Savannah* (1987) had exposed the class of such corrupt selfish politicians who sabotaged the hard-won freedom in Nigeria. Mwangi aims at a redressal of a similar situation in Kenya at the grassroot level : village Kambi, a farming enclave on the slopes of the Aberdane ranges in central Kenya can be treated as a microcosm for the whole of Kenya. Juda’s discourse, for the most part in the novel is addressed to the common, illiterate village scoundrels languishing in a state of stupor and passivity. Juda sounds Gandhian in his criticism of urbanization, machines, chemical fertilizers and in his unconditional praise of indigenous know how and traditional methods of farming and tilling; and yet he is not averse to education.

Decolonisation, for Mwangi, does not correspond to a negation of alien culture .The paradigms offered in the text are indicative of a composite culture though the native’s cultural hegemony is ultimately vindicated. Thus the writer endeavours to create a distaste amongst the villagers. For Mwangi “Nairobi is madness” (SFTW,p.147), so he plans to visit India in future as well.

Juda is pitted against Baba Pesa who enjoys a positioned superiority in the society and following in the footsteps of imperialists is out to appropriate both property and women. The strategies of confrontation or resistance offered in the context of women are most bafflingly bizarre and quizzical but then so is the act of appropriation. Strange relationships might have evolved if Juda’s offer to marry the girl impregnated by his father had been carried through, but Mwangi tacitly avoids such a possibility by causing Margaret’s death in childbirth. Here too, the text owes an allegiance to *Anthill of Savannah* where the birth of a posthumous baby girl is hailed by the masses in an unprecedented manner and the naming ceremony is performed in complete defiance of the age-old custom and tradition. *Striving for the Wind* has a suggestive wishful ending. It ends with the rejoicing of the birth of the posthumous twins -- again in marked deviation from the

customary killing of the ill-owned twins. Baba Pesa has to relent to the familial pressures and circumstantial situations.

There have been different phases of colonial consciousness in the postcolonial literature. Ngugi's *Weep Not,Child* refers to what may be specified as the 'oppositional phase' when the imperialist power posed the major threat to the poor natives. The novel revolves round the adolescence of a young boy Njorge at the time of the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya. Deprived of their land, the natives were reduced to the status of landless labourers. Ngotho, the poor farm labourer narrativises the story of his dispossession of the ancestral land by the white settlers with the stoicism and wisdom of a religious saint. "What happened, O Murungu,to the land which you gave us? Where,0 creator, went our promised land?" (WNC, p. 25). But his sons, epitomizing the younger anti-imperialist generation, refuse to accept the dispossession of the ancestral land with the same kind of parental stoicism and fortitude -- a theme that finds expression in Matigari.

Weep Not,Child focuses primarily, on the failure of the Mau Mau rebellion, due to the treachery and infighting of the natives: one can distinctly perceive the writer's commitment to vindicate the Mau Mau rebellion. Njorge, the adolescent protagonist and Kaman, his elder brother opine that the White people " left their country to come and rob us of what we have"(WNC,p.43). Boro, the Mau Mau activist interrogates his father "How can you continue working for a man who has taken your land? How can you go on serving him?" (WNC, p. 27).

Ngugi, at the preliminary stage of independence was presumably confronted with the stupendous task of creating a national or political consciousness without restoring to the politics of propaganda. He has to come to terms with two conflicting visions. He has his emotional commitment to his group, to his family of landless peasants, but as an artist he never allows the propaganda to annihilate the artist in him. As Peterson puts it: "…by stressing the difficulties rather than the success of gaining a political revolutionary consciousness, Ngugi has indicated the enormity of the task undertaken….These early agonisings, born out of anger, and cataloguing the slow and painful birth of a political conviction with honesty and integrity, give us an extremely valuable

insight into a decisive moment in the history of an emerging nation."[3]

The white man's usurpation of land and the native's betrayal – these two dominant themes run parallel throughout the text. Land is the big issue leading to the crisis in the novel. Both Howlands, the white man and Ngotho, the black farm labourer love the land in their own way. The native's battle is fought at two levels -- with the white man and with the black white settlers. Ngugi intertwines the conflict between the white landowner Howlands and Ngotho and Jacobo, a rich black landowner. Boro, the Mau Mau activist attains a symbolic unity of purpose in the double murder of Howlands, the White settler and Jacobo, the rich black settler. Ngugi adroitly exposes the conflict between the white settlers and the black people but at a deeper level the battle is diversified and directed against their own brothers. The final dispossession of land transpires through Jacobo who comes to represent to Njorge the image of all that had robbed him of victory when the door to success had been opened.

Ngugui's correlation of history with myth is said to be problematic. Kathy Kessler[4] refers to the complex and problematic historical world of Ngugi. Carol Sicherman has referred to historians who object both to Ngugi's "carelessness with details and to his promoting myth as history."[5] She incorporates Carolene Neale's argument to support Ngugi's promotion of myth as history. The writers seek to discover not only what has happened but the ways in which things are felt to happen in history. The intermingling of myth and history in the text has the desired effect as it helps in the reconciliation between Boro, the estranged son and Ngotho, his father. Ngotho's parting words have a historic and mythic undertone: "All right, Fight well. Turn your eyes to Murungn and Ruriri."(WNC,p.124). The myth of Murungn and Ruriri has been employed implicitly to reinforce the dispossessed son into activity. Ngugi uses myth to negate the myth of white man's cultural superiority. His mythicising of history is a powerful mode of decolonisation which prompts the natives to review and reinvent their past with a renewed respected insight. But for both the Kikuyus Africanism does not correspond to a negation of modernity. Education, to an African had been in a way synonymous with the learning of English language. The first generation

nationalists were mainly the English educated Africans. A vast majority of Africans, like the Chief in *Weep Not, Child* upheld the lack of education to be the prime cause of their dispossession of land. In postcolonial Africa, the language issue has been a problematic one especially ever since Ngugi's rejection of English in favour of his vernacular Kikuyu; it has generated a global debate. Mwangi's text incorporates several comical references to Baba Pesa's disjointed reading of English; the sub text surely reveals the author's position in the text. Mwangi belongs to the class of African writers who favour cultural encounter and recognize the plurality of contacts. As Ashcroft puts it: " The postcolonial world is one in which destructive cultural encounter is changing into an acceptance of difference on equal terms."[6]

Susan Bassnett[7] too distinguishes postcolonialism as quite distinct from anti colonialism. Both the writers have specifically highlighted the economic disorder prevalent in Kenyan society and they therefore stress upon the need of integrating the fast disintegrating rural communities with the same feeling of urgency and apprehension. The peasant in postcolonial Kenyan society threatened with fragmentation is still poor, landless and exploited -- only the agents of exploitation have sweeped roles. The need to review the contemporary Kenyan situation and the necessity of collective commitment is reiterated with reinforcement by both the writers.

In a significant move, Ngugi and Mwangi have accorded significant space to female protagonists, which is an assertion of their faith in the growing power of women. Mwihaki in *Weep Not, Child* and Margaret in *Striving for the Wind* are indispensable to the texts and sub texts, the matriarchs with their superhuman perseverance and steadfast devotion to tradition save the families from disintegration. When Njorge in *Weep Not ,Child* goes to the chief's house with a firm resolve to put an end to all his oppression by striking a blow for his family, the ghost of the Chief transformed itself into Mwihaki, the Chief's young daughter and he realized he did not want to hit her but hold her instead and escaped with her from the calamity around. The hypothetical situation in *Striving for the Wind* entails a futuristic vision of reality.

Situated as it is in precolonial Kenya *Weep Not, Child* refers to the oppositional or confrontational phase whereas Mwangi's text makes a transition to the postcolonial era. Juda Pesa has learned and likewise gained equally from the wisdom of ancients and university education. It is significant to note that his discourse is not anticolonial.

On the contrary, Juda's discourse promotes a composite culture with a visible bias in favour of a third world model. Juda's pledge to go to India ,the mythical land of renunciation in lieu of America, the land of Midas, critiques the materialism of postcolonial Kenya.

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INDIA AND V. S. NAIPAUL: THE INTERVENING AREA OF DARKNESS

Pashupati Jha & T. Ravichandran

Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul finally got the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2001. Nevertheless, his name has been lingering in the backdrop for a very long time. For a prize that Alfred Nobel earmarked in literature for outstanding work "of an idealistic tendency," V. S. Naipaul, appears to be "an ironic and controversial choice."[1] Naipaul's brutal observations on the post-colonial world in general, and his caustic remarks on the Indian sub-continent in particular, have drawn for him, like for his intellectual counterpart Nirad C. Chaudhuri, immense critical hostility and anger. Not just today, long back in 1986, such a reputed Indian critic as C. D. Narasimhaiah shudders at the mere thought of Naipaul receiving that coveted prize. He comments in disgust in his article, "V. S. Naipaul: A Case of Bizarre Reputation":

> *I must confess I was disturbed when someone spoke of the possibility of a Nobel Prize for Naipaul. I asked myself if the world's most prestigious award was instituted to honour someone who has injected so much poison into the world's body politic and seems to gloat over it? Speaking for myself, I have been sick of seeing men and women distorted, deprived, diminished, dwarfed, seldom allowed to rise to the full dignity of their true being.*[2]

Further, he goes on pinpointing defects in the contorted mind-set of Naipaul that he "has profaned the exalted vocation of the writer,"[3] and has set for himself, "the glamorous goal of being before the public eye constantly,"[4] by generating controversy after controversy. According to Professor Narasimhaiah, writers like Naipaul denigrade

human beings whereas an artist should try to add dignity to humanity. Also there are many others, like I. K. Masih, who blame Naipaul for his tilted vision of India: "The whole problem with Naipaul is that he looks at India through Western kaleidoscope which takes myriad unreal shapes when aimed at lighted areas."[5] The open question is, "Why use the Western criteria in determining India to be an area of light or darkness?"[6]

In his article, Prof. Narasimhaiah also refers to his meeting with Naipaul where the writer, aware of the critic's ire, says to mollify him: "I am profoundly Indian in my feeling, profoundly Indian in my sensibility…but not in my observation."[7] Nevertheless, for Prof. Narasimhaiah, 'observation' alone is not sufficient for a writer; he must have his own conviction and emotion. In this regard, we, the authors of this paper, feel that this boils down to the problem of perceptional conflict, the case of attitudinal difference. Where Narasimhaiah is like Matthew Arnold or T. S. Eliot emphasising traditional values more than anything else, Naipaul is inclined towards a dissenting individual talent, emphatic of a subjective self that experiences reality and passes judgment accordingly. In the present paper, we have tried to present Naipaul's idea about India as found in *An Area of Darkness* (1964) and then to evaluate to the extent which Naipaul's contemplation of India as dark, dirty, diseased and corrupt could be justified.

Naipaul's first trip to India, the outcome being *An Area of Darkness*, happens to be more traumatic, as his childhood faith in his ancestral "home" is dispelled by his encounter with its dirt and poverty. The India, that existed in "an area of the imagination"[8] in his mind is punctured in the very first encounter itself. There emerges his love-hate relationship with India resulting in a painful realisation of an unresolvable estrangement. The whole problem begins in the beginning of the book itself. Educated and living in England, Naipaul brings two bottles of liquor with him, which is confiscated by the custom authorities in Bombay—his first destination while visiting India. While on his way to India, he has to land at Cairo and Karachi where some of his fairy-like ideas of the East have already thinned down. Yet, the major jolt comes when despite getting permit for those bottles, he needs to obtain "transport permit" for which he has to run from office

to office and from table to table, and face every insignificant official behaving either indifferently or arrogantly. If an outsider gets this first taste of India, we cannot blame him if he subsequently observes other darker things of this country. Thus, at the outset itself a slightly unimpressed attitude of Naipaul is obvious when he says, "I came of a family that abounded with pundits. But I had been born an unbeliever" (32). For such an agnostic mind, this dose of corruption and inadequacy in Indian offices is enough to prejudice him against the brighter side of India.

After official apathy and inefficiency, it is the poverty and squalor of India that gives him another shock. He remarks: "I had seen the starved child defecating at the roadside while the mangy dog waited to eat the excrement" (45). What distresses him further in this context is that it is not only a village scene in India, but almost similar defecating habits he has found on the slopes of Kashmir, at the bus-stand of Madras, and on the beaches of Goa. He wryly notes:

> *Indians defecate everywhere. They defecate, mostly, beside the railway tracks. But they also defecate on the beaches; they defecate on the hills; they defecate on the streets; they never look for cover.…the peasant, Muslim or Hindu, suffers from claustrophobia if he has to use an enclosed latrine (70).*

Thus, to him, this is an all-pervasive habit, and one may feel sore to accept and acknowledge the reality that the same system is prevailing in India even after about forty years of Naipaul's visit to this country. Naipaul, therefore, is right in his observation that "not all the sandal-oil perfumes of Lucknow could hide the stench of gutters and latrines"(46). He is also humourous at places regarding this Indian habit of defecating in groups, "defecating is a social activity; they squat close to one another, they chatter"(70). Moreover, he is amused to find a spiritual element attached to this social act. Owing to Indian's love for nature, they prefer to wake up quite early in the morning, rush towards the river and ease themselves out, "nothing was as poetic as squatting on a river bank at dawn"(70). Further, he draws attention to the fact that if one sees Indian women in a group doing the above action, it is he who should feel the shame: "If you surprise a group of three women, companionably defecating,

they will giggle: the shame is yours, for exposing yourself to such a scene"(69). He refers to Mahatma Gandhi's idea of sanitation here, which, deplorably for him, Indians have completely ignored:

> *Sanitation was linked to caste, caste to callousness, inefficiency and a hopelessly divided country, division to weakness, weakness to foreign rule. That is what Gandhi saw, and no one purely of India would have seen it (74).*

Naipaul is also aghast at the transformation of Gandhi only in Indian archives and not being used as a living reference of guidance. From Bombay, Naipaul comes to Delhi and is affronted by the screeching and screaming porters at the railway station, whining beggars, scuttling auto-rickshaws outside, surrounded by "a jungle of black-and-white noticeboards"(83). Obviously, his initial reaction of Delhi is not appreciative, "it was as though an Indian village had been transformed into concrete and glass, and magnified"(85). Yet, his view of the city is modified to some extent by his hostess Mrs. Mahindra and her bubbling warmth and genuine concern for him. He is her paying guest but in the attitude of that landlady there is no business at all, it is all womanly care "touched with the genuine Indian warmth"(91). Thus, when the scorching heat of Delhi troubles him, Mrs. Mahindra puts him in a room furnished with fan and air-conditioner. Despite his departure from Mrs. Mahindra's house, owing to her husband's disapproval, his fondness for Mrs. Mahindra lasts longer. Occasionally, there are some light-hearted comments on the character of Mrs. Mahindra, who is crazy for anything foreign and wants to marry her elder son to a foreign girl. Nonetheless, it is here, for the first time in the book that Naipaul has something good to think of India.

Outside Mrs. Mahindra's affectionate house, Delhi is almost as callous as Bombay making Naipaul infuriated, depleted, and at times, disgraced at the official aloofness. He narrates, for instance:"'Don't complain to me. Complain to my officer.' 'Which is your bloody officer?' All this with a liberating sense that my violent mood was inviting violence"(92). He sees the hangover of the colonial days still apparent in Delhi in spite of the gusto of the newly emerging capital of Independent India.

After the unbearable heat of Delhi, the next destination of a foreign tourist is bound to be Kashmir. While entering the valley of Kashmir the writer is enthused at the sensuous beauty of the surrounding: "Kashmir was coolness and colour: the yellow mustard fields, the mountains, snow-capped, the milky blue sky in which we re-discovered the drama of clouds"(95). At Srinagar, he hires a room from Mr. M. S. Butt, the owner of Hotel Liward, and stays there for many weeks. There, he is all the time surrounded by Aziz, the servant of Mr. Butt. After Mrs. Mahindra, this Aziz is another person who has been characterised with warmth and a humane touch notwithstanding his constant penchant for bakshish and remorseless robbing of the author of a few dozen rupees. Naipaul brings Aziz to all the places of tourist attraction outside Srinagar. In this context, he gives graphic details of the celebrations of Muslim holy month. He remarks: "Religion was a spectacle, and festivals, women veiled ('so that men wouldn't get excited and think bad things,' the merchant said), women bred and breeding like battery hens; it was the ceremonial washing of the genitals in public before prayers; it was ten thousand simultaneous prostrations" (128).

Later, in order to gain some idea of Indian culture, Naipaul visits a writer's party at Srinagar where he is surprised to find out that artistic talent is equated with writer's melancholic and alcoholic disposition. He is puzzled to note that "In India poets and musicians are required to live the part: it is necessary to be sad and alcoholic"(132-133). However, even in Kashmir, Naipaul is distraught by the prevalence of the cancerous corruption in political and official circles. The Indian government was pouring millions of rupees in Kashmir, but to no avail. What pains him further is that no shame is coming to those corrupt people; instead, a lot of social prestige and status is bestowed on such unscrupulous officials:

> *It is estimated that in Kashmir, as in the rest of India, one-third of development funds drains away in corruption and the exchanging of gifts. No disgrace attaches to this (sic). The Kashmiri tailor spoke with envious admiration of his patwari friend, a surveyor and type of records-keeper, who in one day might collect as much as a hundred rupees; a lorry-driver*

> *had a similar admiration for a traffic inspector he knew who received monthly protection money from various lorry-drivers (135).*

Intermittently, there are cries against corruption in parliament and public forums, but they are just token attempts to tide over public criticism. Eventually, the old system returns back with intensified ferocity and ignominy. The writer, in this manner, has concluded that corruption has become deep-rooted in the Indian system of government and society. Sometimes, this system is as simple as inviting Mr. Madan of the tourist department by the writer to a tea party at the persistent request of Mr. Butt so that he can be issued a sort of permanent licence for his hotel. But, most of the times, it is quite intricate and difficult to bypass.

While in Kashmir, Naipaul is encouraged by Karan Singh, the young Maharaja of Kashmir, to join the pilgrimage to the Cave of Amarnath, the eternal abode of Lord Shiva. Although a non-believer, Naipaul joins that procession in order to have a first-hand feel of religious India. He is deeply touched by the firm faith of Indians in religion: "The god existed: the faces and cries of the returning pilgrims carried this reassurance. I wished I was of their spirit. I wished that something of their joy awaited me at the end" (167). On the contrary, instead of relishing religious fulfilment, Naipaul derives inexplicable joy of being among mountains, especially, the Himalayas. In his childhood fantasy of India, the Himalayas had a special place, a special claim. So travelling through those Himalayan peaks, full of meandering streams and enchanting greenery, filled him with contentment of a unique dimension. Here again, the only disheartening experience for the writer is the horrible sanitation habits of the pilgrims and the cheating by the pony owner. He is further surprised to know that Aziz is part of that fraudulence and has finally taken a few rupees from the pony owner as his commission.

By and large, *An Area of Darkness* is less the record of geographical travels and more that of journey inward, and the emotional sojourn of the author. Accordingly, he may move further to Shimla, Madras, Calcutta, and there may be variations in the topography, but his emotional attitude for the whole of India would be the same or rather further crystalised. In his visit to Shimla, what galls him further is

the unabashed mimicry of colonial life-style of the people and the architecture all around. He wants to see India as India and not as a further extension of the same old British Empire. As a result, his confrontation with such an India is deeply disturbing: "It was an encounter with a humiliation I had never before experienced, and perhaps more so to me than to those Indians who hurried about streets with unlikely English names, in the shadow of imperial-grand houses,"(188). In addition, he is also vexed by the Indian attitude towards inheritance, Indian's obsession with preserving even those monuments which are the symbols of Indian defeat, culturally or otherwise. For Naipaul, most of these ruins and monuments are regressive and a stumbling block for the progress of India: "…in India everything is inherited, nothing is abolished; everything grows out of something else… [piling] decay upon decay"(194).

In Madras, he finds the similar regressive tendency of looking back on the contemporary condition of the country through its past, which Naipaul concludes as "retreat into fantasy and fatalism"(201). What he expects from the Indians is to look directly upon the present predicament and evaluate everything objectively. Hence, he finds fault with the Indian way of reading history which is replete with obsession attached to past glory: "A people with a sense of history might have ordered matters differently. But this is precisely the saddening element in Indian history: this absence of growth and development. It is a history whose only lesson is that life goes on. There is only a series of beginning, no final creation"(202). In the same historical context, he has another view of Indian's perpetual sense of tolerance celebrated as a virtue because he finds it originating "from the negative principle"(217). It is because of such misreading of history on India's part that the Indians are rendered "incapable of self-assessment"(216). Nonetheless, his visit to West Bengal provides a few moments of relief. Although he expects Calcutta to be worse than any other Indian cities because of his reading of some comments in American magazine describing it as 'the world's most miserable city' and 'the world's last stronghold of Asiatic cholera,' he finds touches of grace and elegance there. Yet, Calcutta is only a part of India and hence full of the same squalor and poverty: "With its thin glitter, its filth

and overpopulation, its tainted money, its exhaustion, it held the total Indian tragedy and the terrible British failure"(244).

Still, the most important visit of Naipaul is made to his ancestral village of Brahmins (Dubeys) in eastern Uttar Pradesh. He is moved by the humility and warmth of his distant relatives; at the same time, he is upset by their ignorance and poverty. An old woman in that village is so much overwhelmed by his visit that she breaks into sobs. But Naipaul's main relative Ramachandra who is away from the village knocks at his hotel the next day with a sackful of rice, all from his ancestral field. Naipaul wonders what he would do with so much of rice and he reluctantly refuses the gift. Nevertheless, whether the author accepts it or not, it is actually a prelude to something else, which Ramachandra hesitates to word out. Finally, it turns out to be a request for sufficient money to file a suit against someone in the village who has an eye on his ancestral land. It is with great difficulty that Naipaul can get rid of this man though with a sense of self-reproach and guilt.

Mostly, Naipaul is true to details that any reader, who has lived in an Indian village or who has travelled in large parts of the country, can easily verify. Yet, the fact remains that Naipaul has very little concern for the brighter side of India. He, therefore, has de-glamourised the conventional picture of the Taj Mahal; "it is only a despot's monument to a woman… who bore a child every year for fifteen years"(206). Almost the same sense of dismissal is there in his next book, *India: A Wounded Civilisation* (1977). Yet, these two books were written with a dark background--in the case of *An Area of Darkness*, it was the defeat of India by China in 1962; in the case of the next book it was the backdrop of Emergency imposed on the country by Mrs. Indira Gandhi. In his final book on the trilogy of India, *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990), Naipaul has mellowed down. However, the focus of this paper is the first book where his approach is largely one-sided. The following lines from the book would indicate his inner thought while boarding his train back to England:

> *I changed my third-class ticket for a first-class one, picked my way down dim platforms past the bodies of dogs and men, past third-class carriages which were already full and hot. The conductor opened the door of my compartment and I climbed in. I bolted*

> *the door, pulled down all the blinds, trying to shut out the howls of dogs, shutting out intruders, all those staring faces and skeletal bodies. I put on no lights. I required darkness (227).*

The above statement clearly indicates that Naipaul wants to avoid 'third-class' people of India, wants to escape from the bitter realities, and hence he needs darkness to cover himself with even in the prevailing darkness of the country all around.

Prof. R. K. Kaul, in a different context, defends the total attitude of the writer by concluding that "Naipaul's outlook is anti-primitivist"[9] and that he is "anti-pastoral"[10] in his sentiment. And in this way, the writer, "sets out systematically to demolish the myth of the noble savage popularised in post-Rousseau Europe."[11] In similar vein, but in the context of *An Area of Darkness*, another critic has pointed out that "His home-coming had been an assault on his European-styled sensibility."[12] And yet another critic is of the opinion that "he has been unable to accept what he has discovered" in his ancestor's country.[13]

But all these critics overlook the fact that even Naipaul does not take pleasure in his conclusions about India. Whatever is said is said with a pinch of salt: "I did not want India to sink; the mere thought was painful"(243). In like manner, he laments the fact that he could not belong to this country as he could not belong to England where he landed as a young lad of eighteen with exhilaration: "I was not English or Indian; I was denied the victories of both"(98). Overall, Naipaul does not take any delight in 'demeaning' India; whenever he finds filth, he does not glamourise it, rather, he expresses a feeling of regret at this degeneration. He thus admits: "The ugliness was all mine"(256). It is therefore inaccurate on the part of critics like C. D. Narasimaiah to accuse the author of "vicariously enjoying a kind of inverted snobbery"[14] and to conclude that "he has a newspaperman's nose for stench."[15] The truth is that the alienated mind of the author is not easily accepting the glorified picture of India, which is in conflict with his actual experience of the country. At length, one agrees with the insight of Rajeev Srinivasan after a re-reading of Naipaul, that Naipaul was not wrong: he merely wrote what he had observed, and he had been horribly disappointed. The culture shock must have been brutal. For

the India of his imagination and of his ancestral memory, of the resplendent culture, was not visible: it was hidden under the weight of a thousand years of shame and grime.[16]

From a strong wish to impose himself by being distinctive, by creating a difference and have a sense of a full reality of himself, the writer ends in a total alienation and utter withdrawal at the end. Beginning with an ardent fervour to belong, and ending with a realisation of his incapacity to belong, mostly because of his western breeding and the subsequent problem of his "unhousedness,"[17] *An Area of Darkness* is at once a highlighter of the darkness within and without. In fact, at several places in the book, the author is aggrieved at the fact that he fails to relate himself to the country of his grandfather because between him and India, darkness intervenes. This is an intervening darkness of the "inbetweenness" of the colonial and post-colonial condition that he carries throughout in his individual and artistic life.

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THE SENSE OF HISTORY IN V.S. NAIPAUL'S *THE MYSTIC MASSEUR*

Bijaya Kumar Nanda

Throughout his literary career , Naipaul has never aimed at "fantasy or triumphs of imagination ". He has tried to be true to his own experiences. For him literature does not occupy a "trans-historical" aesthetic realm but is integral with other social practices that, in their complex interactions, make up the general history of an era. But he is not a mere social historian. His literature and society can be put in symbolic or meaningful relations of consistency, harmony, coherence, congruence, structural identity and stylistic analogy.

Naipaul's early novels draw upon actual persons and events especially among the East Indians in recent Trinidadian history. His feelings of displacement in the West Indies and subsequent exile are the sources of his analysis of the effects of colonialism on the modern world. His problem was how to create a fictional world which would seem real with a feeling of community, when the society involved was chaotic and rapidly changing. To present such a society he blended the art of the social historian with that of a literary satirist. Details of clothing, housing, manners and speech are precisely present in his novels. The satirist notes through caricature and irony, "the aspirations, energy, vulgarities, inconsistencies and corruption of characters who belong to a rapidly changing society in which there are few stable values."[1]

In *The Mystic Masseur*, Naipual gives an authentic account of the Trinidadian diasporic community. Here the British colonisers form the dominant race who exploit the East Indians. The East Indians aspire for western world values represented by western education, competitiveness, market economy, capitalism, parliamentary democracy and secular hierarchies. It seems that Naipaul believes in Michel

Foucault's theory that "the patterns of power-relations at any given era in a society constitute the concepts, oppositions, and hierarchies of its discourse, and in this way determine what will be accounted knowledge and truth, as well as what will be considered humanly normal and so serve to define and exclude what, in that era, is accounted to be criminal, insane, or sexually deviant".[2] But a close reading of *The Mystic Masseur* shows the novel has been a site for the dialogic interaction of two modes of discourse : the conservative Hinduism and the Western liberal Humanism.

Ganesh Ramsumair, the protagonist of *The Mystic Masseur*, embodies all the controversies of the colonial society. The narrator of the novel records his opinion that "the history of Ganesh is in a way, the history of our times."[3] Ganesh's character reflects the attenuation of Hindu culture in various ways. From his boyhood Ganesh is shown as ashamed of his Hindu origins. So at the Queen's Royal College in Port of Spain he pretends that his name is Gareth, not Ganesh. Mr. Ramsumair, Ganesh's father, made a lot of noise about sending his son to the college and the week before the term began he took Ganesh all over the district, showing him off to friends and acquaintances. "He had Ganesh dressed in a Khaki suit and a Khaki toupee and many people said the boy looked like a little sahib" (19). Ganesh's European dress stands in striking contrast to that of his father who wore his visiting outfit : "dhoti, koortah, white cap and an unfurled umbrella on the crook of his left arm" (19). Mr. Ramsumair , who still sticks to his Indianness and sees no logic in discarding it, wants to see his son as a sahib and not a country peasant, a misfit in the colony. Most East Indian parents reacted in the same way to the colonial situation. A few Brahmins wanted their sons to be trained as Pundits but most others were attracted by Western education, which they believed, was necessary to raise material status.

When Ganesh leaves the countryside and goes to the town for education, he symbolically leaves the Hindu feudal world for the capitalist society. The materialist values of capitalist society might change his Hindu ideals. That is why the women advise Ganesh to uphold the traditional Indian values by respecting the memory of his dead mother and remaining loyal to his father. Ganesh's desire to anglicize his name from Ganesh to Gareth shows the influence of the

Western culture on that of the East. But it does not help him. In the long run, he remains essentially an East Indian: "his accent remained too clearly that of the Indian from the country" (20).

Ganesh cannot free himself from the Hindu customs and rites. At the time of his initiation into Brahminhood, he is given a saffron bundle and is called upon to go to Benares as the ritual demands for studying the scriptures. But the absurdity of the ceremony is soon revealed when Dookhie asks him to cut out this nonsense of going to Benares. This type of ritual speaks voluminously about the degenerate society which clings to ceremonies and observances inherited from ancestors but never bothers to know their deeper significance. This Brahminic initiation ceremony resulting in Ganesh's shaving his head and the consequent ridicule of his friends and the principal of his college highlight the contradiction of the two worlds which "exist not only at the level of mythology but also at the level of social practice."[4]

After passing Cambridge School Certificate examination and completing the course in Government Training College for teachers in Port of Spain Ganesh serves for a brief period as a teacher. But the realities of the new world are too much for him to bear. He gives up his teaching job and comes from " the emptiness of urban life back into the stimulating peace and quiet of the country"(31). Ganesh never got used to the ways of Port of Spain, which was, for him, "too big, too noisy and too alien"(31). Ganesh's frequent visits to Ramlogan's shop at the latter's request, his marriage to Leela and their conjugal life reveal different aspects of the Indian way of life. Marriage, here, is treated as 'Pre-ordained' (46); eligible bachelors are traced and trapped as prospective husbands for marriageable daughters, and then "it was all right" (35). After the marriage is fixed both Ganesh and Ramlogan pretend that the bride and the groom have never met earlier, because it is considered wrong, on the part of the Hindu "to see his wife before marriage" (48). Naipaul shows the conflict between the old Indian way of invitation and the new western way. Ramlogan does not think it proper to send "the messenger around to give the saffron-dyed rice to friends and relations and announce the wedding. The custom is regarded as old fashioned one and is replaced by printed

invitations on scalloped and gilt-edged cards" (79). Dowry is associated with Hindu marriages. The bridegroom, as per the custom, won't start eating the kedgeree so long as he is not satisfied with the dowry his father-in-law has offered. Ganesh gets from his father-in-law a cow and a heifer, fifteen hundred dollars in cash and a house in Fuente Grove. Ramlogan also cancels the bill for the food he had sent to Ganesh's house.

Leela, Ganesh's wife, plays the role of the traditional Hindu housewife, "squatting before the low chulha fire, stirring boiling rice in a blue enamel pot" (65), taking care of "the garden at the back of the house" and the cow. As wife-beating has a social sanction Leela does not complain when Ganesh beats her. "Leela continued to cry and Ganesh loosened his leather belt and beat her" (60). But she has come under the influence of Western education. So she leaves Ganesh's house for Ramlogan's. This act of leaving her husband is censured by Suraj Mooma, Beharry's wife. She says : "I go never leave my husband, I ain't educated enough" (92). Leela's exposure to the modern Western world is revealed in Beharry's comment : "These young girls today think that getting married is some sort of a game. Something like rounders. Running back" (91). Here Naipaul points out that although Leela remains very much a part of the old Hindu world she has also felt the impact of Western education and the pull of the western world.

Ramabai Espinet in an article entitled "Representation and the Indo-Caribbean Women in Trinidad and Tobago" complains that the woman of Indian origin "is under-represented and where she is represented she is not seen an equal participant."[5] Although women possess the same potential as men, they remain invisible because "they revert to the seclusion of the patriarchal culture which has always kept them in the women's quarters."[6] Espinet sees *ohrani* and *chadar* as two perfect instruments used for isolating women from men. She considers *ohrani* "a powerful metaphor for the weight of the binding customs and rituals to which Indians have been habituated for centuries."[7] Ramabai's views may be true in case of Leela and Suraj Mooma in *The Mystic Masseur* but Suraj Mooma's and Beharry's comments on marriage dialogically interact with her views.

Naipul's novel is embedded in its context, as an interactive component within the network of institutions, beliefs, and cultural power-relations, practices, and products that, in their ensemble, constitute the history of modern Trinidad. There is the two-way oscillatory relationships among the two cultures. The economic and monetary discourse of the capitalist Western culture and its modern consumer capitalism holds greater attraction for Ganesh. He is attracted towards money and prestige. His adoption of the role of a mystic clearly demonstrates the attenuation of traditional Hindu cultural values in Trinidad. As a Hindu holy man, Ganesh can hardly be taken much more seriously than the ridiculous Mr. Stewart, the English 'Hindu' whom he meets just before his marriage, but his cunning enables him to act his part successfully. He is a travesty of the Hindu Guru. In a debunking tone the author writes that Ganesh 'Is the sorta man who would be a rishi in India"(13). He never for a moment seriously entertains the possibility of his attaining genuine sainthood. Ganesh is obsessed with the externals of books. Type-faces, bindings and format are more important to him than the contents of the books which he buys and though he uses them as tools with which to impress his clients, he too is seduced by their physical appearance. Naipaul's irony is repeatedly directed against the reverential awe with which his uneducated characters regard books. Thus when Ganesh has three hundred Everyman volumes delivered to his house, he records waspishly, "It was one of the biggest things that had happened to Fuente Grove" (75).

Ganesh is opportunistic with regard to Hinduism. After his opportunistic espousal of Hinduism during his mystic phase, he finally gives himself completely over to the Western way of life, to which he has been attracted since his first visit to Port of Spain. Hinduism to Ganesh, is not more than a mark to be worn as long as it pays dividends and he aptly deserves the epithet "businessman of God"(147), which his enemy Narayan gives him. Even during his period as a mystic, it is only one strand, albeit the most prominent in the religious hotchpotch which he employs and even his eclecticism may be interpreted as an ironic allusion to the all-inclusive tolerance of Hinduism. Naipaul writes : "He was no bigot. He took as much interest in Christianity and Islam as in Hinduism. In the shrine, the old bed room, he had pictures of Mary and Jesus next to Krishna and Vishnu; a crescent

and star represented iconoclastic Islam. 'All the same God, 'he said. Christians liked him. Muslims liked him, and Hindus, willing as ever to risk prayers to new gods, didn't object (139).

Ganesh obviously wants to prosper through mysticism. As John Thieme aptly observes : "During the period as mystic masseur his instinct for business never fails him."[8] His restaurant and the taxi service which he takes over from Ramlogan are money-making exercises; masquerading as an altruist for bored American soldiers is another commercial venture. The most ironic of all is the pride of place he gives to a picture of Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of prosperity on the stage-set which he erects to help him cure the boy who feels he is being pursued by a black cloud. Ostensibly this is in keeping with the prominence accorded to Lakshmi in many Hindu homes, but in Ganesh's case traditional Hindu frugality has been replaced by capitalist acquisitiveness and Lakshmi is only a means in his efforts to earn money.

Ganesh's identity with the new capitalist economy becomes closer. But he has not left the old world altogether. He goes to Panchayats, councils of elders of Indian settlements in Trinidad, to act as an arbiter. He addresses prayer meetings. But he is after the Western success myth. He writes a number of books which make his name "a household word in Trinidad" (164). Ganesh contests the election and gets himself elected. Then he becomes Hon'ble Ganesh Ramsumair, M.L.C. In order to achieve this success he has to take recourse to the Hindu ways of organising *Bhagawats* and feeding people with Hindu vegetarian dishes. Ganesh now is transformed from a nonentity to someone who really matters. His rise "from teacher to Masseur, from masseur to mystic, from mystic to M.L.C."(28) is indeed spectacular.

Ganesh's embarrassment at the Governor's dinner reveals his precarious position. Leela, his wife, decides not to join the dinner to which members of the new legislative council and their wives are invited. The orthodox Hindu spirit in her makes her conscious of the food she is going to eat. For her "It are like going to a restaurant. You don't know what the food are and you don't know who cook it" (206). Ganesh decides to go. But he tells his wife that he would not use knife and fork and would eat with his fingers. But the dinner became a torture to Ganesh. He felt alien and uncomfortable

and refused all the courses. He did not like the western style of eating and preferred his own Indian ways.

Soon Ganesh changes his ways. He goes to cocktail parties at Government House and drinks lemonade. He wears a dinner-jacket to official dinners. He is sent by the British Government to Lake success and he defends British colonial rule. He is nominated to the Legislative Council and made an M.B.E. The struggling Hindu boy ends up as a brown sahib. In the Epilogue Naipaul writes that when he addressed Ganesh as 'Pandit Ganesh Ramsumair', Ganesh corrected him and coldly said that he was 'G. Ramsay Muir'. This meeting with Ganesh highlights Ganesh's loss of principles and his Hindu identity for a minor imperial title. Nondita Mason Says : "The Epilogue makes Ganesh's transformation to a colonial puppet, his surrender to cultural bastardization, complete."[9] This may be so. But what matters most in Naipaul's novel is the conflict between an intense need to retain an Indian identity and the compulsion to assimilate into a creole culture. Living in a multi-racial society and having the colonizer as the model, the East Indians were under heavy pressure to shed their exclusiveness and accept the colonizer's way of life. The attempt to accommodate conflicting claims on their loyalties complicated their attitudes to history, tradition and identity. Naipaul's authorial stance in *The Mystic Masseur* is ironical. His comic mode operating through caricature, burlesque and parody shows that he does not side wholly with either the Hindu way or the European way of life. In fact. his characters oscillate between the two ways of life.

Naipaul has, in fact, made a culture study in his novel. He has critically perceived the two types of cultural behaviour, institutions, processes, and products prevailing in the colonised multicultural society in Trinidad. The two cultures -- the Indian conservative Hindu Culture and the European Liberal Capitalist Culture carry on a dialogic intercourse in the novel and in the process give an authentic history of Trinidad in the Post Colonial era.

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A STRUGGLE AGAINST THE ALL-PERVADING NIHILISM: A RE-READING OF NAIPAUL'S *MR. STONE AND THE KNIGHT'S COMPANION*

B. Yadava Raju

After writing *A House for Mr. Biswas* Naipaul appears to be preoccupied with the idea of London as an alternative to the colonial life in Trinidad. His earlier novels hint at the idea of escape into a better society, a civilization and environment, which would be congenial to the development of individual personality and independence of thought. He, therefore, discusses his experience of London, the capital of British Empire, and presumably, an ideal place and the seat of high culture, in his next two novels: *Mr.Stone and the Knights Companion* and *The Mimic Men*.

V.S. Naipaul's fifth novel, *Mr.Stone and the Knights Companion* (1963), appears to be a different work in the sense that in it he does not demonstrate an immediate and obvious concern with the Third World societies. He moves away from his native West Indian milieu to an English setting. Naipaul, according to V.S. Pritchett, "succeeds in the transition: there is little that can be faulted in the Englishness of the setting or the tone".[1] But R.H. Lee feels that it is not transition, but a continuation of Naipaul's earlier interest and concerns. Lee also points out certain similarities between Mr. Biswas and Mr. Stone to substantiate his argument. Mr. Biswas and Mr. Stone share certain attitudes to life. Though they are buffeted about by fate, they believe, the novelist seems to suggest, that they achieve something in their lives.

As a result of this shift of interest the novel has received less attention than the other works of Mr. Naipaul. The novel has been viewed as his attempt to escape from being regarded

as a "regional"[2] writer, and as a "minor"[3] writer. Even the comments Naipaul has made from time to time on the composition of *Mr.Stone and the Knights Companion* suggest that there is something rather perfunctory about it. Naipaul says that his previous novel, *A House for Mr. Biswas* " totally absorbed" him for three years. He says: "It was like a career – I've been feeling unemployed ever since."[4]

But *Mr. Stone and the Knights Companion* appears to have been written in a completely different spirit: "I had to write another book, to prove to myself that I could write, that it wasn't all over, that one had a talent. It wasn't written out of anything else but that and the subject did present itself to me."[5]

Despite this, the novel explores the same themes as his earlier novels from a different angle of vision. Here also Naipaul is concerned with the struggle of the protagonist against the all-pervading nihilism and his refusal to be pushed to a point of nonentity. The novel is set mainly in South London and Mr.Stone is first presented as a fanatically conservative suburban little man who is dreadfully afraid of his neighbour's cat which violates his garden. He believes in "solidity, continuity and flow". He amuses himself by writing out curricula vitae. He likes to think about his life in terms of numbers that he has been with Excal for "thirty years" and has been living in the house for "twenty-four years."**[6]** Richard Stone is determined to ensnare and kill the cat, but his efforts are in vain. After his near attack on the cat Mr. Stone becomes unusually active. Exactly one week later he meets the lady he is to marry soon, Mrs. Margaret Springer, at the dinner party of Tony Tomlinson's. They get married in March.

But soon Mr.Stone regrets the marriage because he loses his privacy and "solitude". He cannot readily accept the new responsibility: "Communing with his tree, he could not help contrasting its serenity" (p.45). He immediately begins to feel caged, controlled, a play-thing of women. This feeling grows in Cornwall. In Cornwall, seeking their road, the Stones follow a mysterious man who "sets a field mysteriously afire, and Mr.Stone is robbed of earth and reality … It was like an experience of nothingness, an experience of earth" (p. 64). It is this experience and his habit of "examining people older than himself" that draws his attention to an old man, just

retired, and captive of two women in a tea-shop. This picture of a retired old man reminds him of his own approaching retirement. He becomes moody and sick of living. Out of his long and serious brooding over this life of retirement an idea to succour superannuated men occurs to him. It is quite a simple idea: the large firm for which he works should establish a system of pensioned ex-employees visiting each other with gifts supplied by the firm, and reporting any case of hardship which the firm then alleviates. It is an attempt to establish some personal relations in a commercial world, a final gesture of solidarity with other people arising out of Mr. Stone's own isolated state.

The PRO of the company, Mr. Bill Whymper, provides all the flashy externals: the pretentious name, the mock medieval ceremonies and the favourable publicity. But as the idea is given shape, it loses its relevance and becomes another routine work. Mr. Stone gets disillusioned, and once again his life declines into darkness as the idea degrades into a commercial venture:

> *He stripped the city of all that was enduring and saw all that was not flesh was of no importance to man. All that mattered was man's own frailty and corruptibility. The order of the universe, to which he had sought to ally himself, was not his order. So much he had seen before. But now he saw, too, that it was not by creation that man demonstrated his power and defied this hostile order, but by destruction. By damning the river, by destroying the mountain, by so scarring the face of the earth that Nature's attempt to reassert himself became a mockery. (pp. 158-59)*

He comes to the realization that "nothing that was pure ought to be exposed" (p. 149). He even realises that all that he has done is only "a betrayal of feeling and truth, -- a betrayal of that good emotion." (p. 149).

Although Mr. Stone is initially portrayed as satisfied with his life style, he soon comes to realize the uncongenial social set-up that does little to encourage an individual's struggle to be independent and original. He is weighed down by the rigid order of his society. Gradually his awareness of his condition is communicated through the changing seasonal

image of a tree he can see from his back window, and the neighbour's cat. At first he uses the seasonal changes of the tree to mark the passage of time: "There was a tree in the school grounds at the back of his house by which he noted the passage of time, the waxing and waning of the seasons" (p.20).

As time passes and Mr. Stone's life progresses he begins to feel excluded from the tree's rhythm and cycles. He learns to distinguish the dull, monotonous routine of his life from the rhythm of the tree. The tree dies in winter and will be reborn in Spring. But his own death will bring no such renewal. The break in the pattern in his life is brought about by his marriage. He marries Mrs. Margaret Springer, who is over fifty, with the hope that marriage will help him break out of the prison of social routine. But this does not happen. Instead, Margaret moulds herself completely and becomes only an extension of himself. She not only encourages him to keep up the routine of his earlier life but influences him to undertake other socially acceptable formalities. The uninterested and boring parties Mr. Stone hosts become a cumbersome burden to be endured. Marriage does not bring about any renewal for which Mr. Stone unconsciously yearns. He comes to learn his separateness from the tree in his backyard.

Similar is Mr. Stone's reaction to the black cat, which he appears to reproach at the very beginning of the book. The cat symbolizes a natural society that is largely different from the contemporary society which has adopted a narrow routine life. Mr. Stone attempts to draw inspiration from the world of the cat: "His communion with the cat, stretching every morning in the warming sunshine, made him more attentive to the marks of the approaching spring" (p.133).

Towards the end of the novel Mr. Stone wonders about nature's cycle and man's relationship to it: "Doesn't make you think, though?" He said. "Just the other day the tree was so bare. And that dahlia bush. Like dead grass all winter. I mean, don't you think it's just the same with us? That we too will have our spring?" (p.146).To this Mrs. Margaret replies, "I think it's a lotta rubbish" (p.147). Mr. Stone acknowledges that she is right and realistic. This is so because the society is one in which the Stones and many others like them have ceased to believe in Spring and the

value of renewal. Stone's yearning for Spring is an expression of his conviction as well as doubt. His first attempt at renewal includes his marriage with Margaret which ends in failure.

His second and the most important attempt is this plan for the Knight's companion. While on this plan he experiences the vigour of renewal. Work becomes a joy for the first time in his life, and proves to be invigorating. The pure dream he has of introducing renewal and springtime into the lives of old men by keeping them active and useful after their retirement is contaminated and used, much to his chagrin, as a good public relations gimmick by his company. The PRO of his company Bill Whymper, a salesman, creates nothing, but enjoys 'licking other people's creations into shape'. Here Mr. Stone and Mr. Whymper are just like the old black cat and the young black cat. The two are attuned to totally different orders of the world. The older one is much more committed to social justice than the younger one. But society has traditionally given greater respect to salesmen and bureaucrats than to artists, to destroyers than to creators. Society succeeds in exiling Mr. Stone from the universe of nature. He could never share his creation with any one. Stone, as his name suggests, remains unchanged and unaffected by the social upheavals, but regrets that "nothing that was pure ought to be exposed" (p.149). Exposure merely leaves the pure open to corruption and destruction. The creative individual must go on cultivating his garden, as Mr. Stone does. Though this is a shattering discovery, Mr.Stone refuses to join the destroyers and settles down to a little work at the end of the book.

Mr. Stone and the Knights Companion makes it clear that it is very difficult to be creative and independent in a society, but none can prevent one from being creative and original. The novel deals with Mr. Stone's "quest for renewal" in the midst of decay, destruction and degradation. Throughout the book runs a pattern of images which reflects Mr. Stone's environment and the gloom of his life, the icy fear that possesses him. The story opens in winter, and Stone's house is described as 'a cold, dark, empty place'. Again and again Naipaul refers to "the empty house" or "the cold darkness of the empty house" (pp. 9-10).

Despite such an environment, Stone is able to create and carve an original idea. He is reminded of his passivity and life of inaction whenever he looks out through the window of his bathroom. Naipaul's evocation of the warm intimacy of contact among the children in the school grounds provides a significant contrast to the coldness and emptiness that surrounds Stone and to the negative, sterile quality of his relationship with people around him. The frequent references to darkness, decay and death stress the condition of Mr. Stone and the threat to him of 'uncreative years' and approaching old-age. The tree in the school grounds engages Stone's attention throughout the novel and is used by Naipaul as a recurring device to suggest, symbolically, the nature of Mr. Stone's experience. The tree's endless seasonal renewal foreshadows Stone's "energetic, restless and enterprising" (p.66) creativity. Like the tree, the image of the cat recurs frequently in the novel as a contrastive vital image, and its destruction foreshadows Mr. Stone's inevitable failure.

However, it would be misreading of the novel to consider Mr. Stone a destroyer. The sad and strong emotion roused by the final picture of Mr. Stone indicates that he is, like Mr. Biswas, set against a world of degradation and nihilism: "He was no destroyer. Once before the world had collapsed about him. But he had survived. And he had no doubt that in time calm would come to him again. Now he was only very tired. In the empty house, he was alone …" (p.160).

Though he is alone in the empty house he can extend his love, the "desire to rescue and protect and cause to continue". He is ready to extend himself and realizes that despair is destruction. Mr. Stone at last asserts to himself that he was "no destroyer". He creates his future out of what is available to him. He is beginning to accept the notion of man's relationship with those around him and he feels a new sense of belonging. The success of his plan brings him glory and happiness. The act of writing offers Mr. Stone a sense of relief from the intense feelings of void and alienation. Despite the physical suffering and defeat, Mr. Stone, like Mr. Biswas, rises in the end above his predicament. His life emphasises human perseverance and shows that there is a way out for all of us to succeed in this dark world.

Mr. Stone's life thus indicates the existentialist idea that a man's being healthily rooted in his environment, in his family, his native land and its traditions, is not to be interpreted simply as a natural and healthy state, but is actually questionable and in the highest degree a threat to existence. Having "roots" in reality is a form of absorption or conformism: the more a man is sustained by tradition and environment or by the formative authority of his family, the more difficult it is for him to actualize his own individual life -- in a word, an existence. Thus Naipaul's preoccupation with London as a possible alternative to his life in Trinidad appears to be undermined by Mr. Stone's saga as unfolded in the novel.

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MOTHER IN *MACBETH :* A STUDY OF THE CHARACTERS OF LADY MACBETH AND LADY MACDUFF

Ajit Kumar Mukherjee

Macbeth is different from all other tragedies. It is the only play which is universal in nature; the only play which is relevant to our own time. It is not the play about father and daughters, son avenging the unjust murder of his father; or a tale of love, jealousy, and death. It is the play where the king is murdered by his own general; order is violated; chaos is confirmed; confusion is more confounded. It is what Wilson Knight says, "a wrestling of destruction with creation".[1] It is the play where a mother is ready to sacrifice her motherhood and strangle her babe in order to help her husband to achieve his cherished goal. She is emotionally and physically committed to the cause of her husband. She lives for her husband. Whatever will she has she wields it for her husband so that he can realise his dreams. It is also the play about another mother who remains unaffected by the fate of her husband, by the happenings around her. She is not aware of the death awaiting her and her son. She grumbles at her husband's negligence of duty towards the family. So these two mothers : Lady Macbeth and Lady Macduff -- one renouncing the motherhood for her husband, another claiming the attention for being the wife and the mother of his child --form an interesting study of the play. This paper will make an attempt to study how these two mothers, diametrically opposite in nature, play their respective roles in the play.

L.C. Knight's article "How many Children Had Lady Macbeth?" is meant to parody the Shakespearean criticisms that are "deflected by too great a stress upon personality which inquiries into 'latent motives and policies not avowed, 'or into pseudo-critical investigations that are

only slightly parodied by the title of this essay".[2] This messianic zeal of Knights is to be read in the light of New-Criticism. But Knight, like Bradley, commits the same fallacy, when he calls Macbeth "a halfhearted cowardly criminal, and Lady Macbeth, "a wholehearted fiend." [3] An unbiased reading of any Shakespearean play unravels many interesting things hitherto unnoticed. Every time it's a new experience one feels.

It is only in Act I sc.v of *Macbeth*[4] that Lady Macbeth is introduced to the audience. She is introduced with the letter from Macbeth. He confides to his wife his meeting with the witches and their forecasts. She is referred to in the letter as "my dearest partner of greatness." It is in her response to the letter that Lady Macbeth says, "Glamis thou art, Cawdor and shall be/what thou art promised" (Act I sc. v.). Hence, it is evident from the play that Macbeth had confided to Lady Macbeth his desire and dream to be the King of Scotland : and this could only be done by the murder of the king. So the murder was not only discussed but promised. A promise made by a soldier has much more significance than the promise of a common man. And it is the sacrosanct duty of a soldier's wife to see that her husband does not deviate from his promised goal. It was, thus, dormant or, at best, remained in his heart; his head lacked the skill and the courage to execute the desire of his heart. Lady Macbeth speaks of his weakness, "Art not without ambition, but without/ The illness should attend it" (Act I sc.v). Macbeth is ambitious but is frightened of the consequences. Nevertheless, he would not like his wishes to be "undone". She is afraid of the "milk of human kindness" in her husband and asks him to come to her soon so that she may pour her spirits into him. She would like to chastise him "with the valour of her tongue" so that he would be emboldened to clear all the hurdles from his path to the crown. Lady Macbeth knows very well that her husband cannot achieve his goal without her help. In his absence she gets herself mentally prepared.

She is a woman and she is aware of her own limitations. She has what each woman, especially a mother, has : compassion, the milk of human kindness which she finds in her husband. So in the soliloquy in Act I sc.v she clearly states her preparation for the final act. She invokes her

spirits to unsex her then and there and fill her from the crown to toe, “top-full of direst cruelty make thick my blood, /stop the access and passage to remorse; / That no compunctious visitings of Nature/ Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between/ th’ effect and it.” (Act I sc.v). Not satisfied with direct cruelty she invokes ”the murthering ministers”, the attendant spirits, to take away her milk and put gall in its place. The milk of human kindness should, thus, be turned into gall of human discord so that she can have smooth sailing.

Lady Macbeth is prepared before the arrival of Macbeth. When Macbeth comes he is asked to carry out her instructions. He is frightened to see his wife in her new garb. He says out of fear, “We will speak further” (Act I sc.v). Lady Macbeth tells him to “look up clear” and “leave all the rest to me” (Ibid). When the time comes for action she finds her husband ”infirm of purpose” (Act II sc. ii). She chastises him with the valour of her tongue :

> *“Wouldst thou have that*
> *Which thou esteemest the ornament of life,*
> *And live a coward in thine own esteem*
> *Letting “I dare not” wait upon “I would”*
> *Like the poor cat in ‘th’ adage ?” (Act 1 scvii).*

This is too much for Macbeth, “Bellona’s bridegroom” and he says, “Pr’y thee peace./I dare do all that may becomes a man;/ Who dares do more, is none”. (Act I scvii).

None knows Macbeth better than Lady Macbeth, and she still has her doubts about his firmness of purpose. So she uses the last weapon of a woman, her motherhood, the pride of a woman, the filial bond between the child and her. She implores him to act when the time is ripe and says :

> *I have given suck, and know*
> *How tender’ts to love the babe that milks me :*
> *I would, while it was smiling in my face,*
> *Have pluck’d my nipple from his boneless gums.*
> *And dash’d the brains out, had so sworn*
> *As you have done to this. (Act I sc.viii).*

Critics, since Coleridge, have not pardoned Lady Macbeth for the above lines in the play. She has been considered an embodiment of evil, a pernicious woman, a negation of all

motherly attributes—a total annihilation of life-force. But one has to read between the lines against the context and understand the intention of Lady Macbeth. Why does she utter such horrible words that bring down the name of woman and the concept of mother. That is why, Macbeth cries out, “Bring forth men-children only” (Act 1 scvii).

Lady Macbeth knows that she is a woman, a mother who knows the tender feeling of a mother feeding her child from the breasts. But the same woman, the same mother, would not hesitate to pluck the nipple from the “boneless gums” of her child, if required, “dashed the brain out” for her vow. Macbeth is built on pretension, treachery and betrayal. Lady Macbeth pretends to be what she is not. She betrays her own self just to help her husband fulfil his dream. How long can one betray oneself, or be a traitor to oneself ? She fails to hold on to her ‘borrowed robe’. The robe falls off; she is nude, exposed to the world. The lady who had admonished her husband, “a little water clears us of the deed” (Act II sc.ii), sighs, “Here’s the smell of the blood still : all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh oh oh !” (Act V sc.i).

The mother in Lady Macbeth comes off. She falters where she had thought she was treading very firmly. It is not the wife Lady Macbeth who breaks down, but the mother in Lady Macbeth cries out for a little blessing, ‘amen’ before her death. Even if she has no children as Macduff says, (Act IV sciii) she feels the experience of feeding the babe from her breasts. Shakespeare has deliberately kept us in mystery about her children because it gears her up, makes her steadfast in her determination to execute her plan. The absence of children makes her more devoted to her husband. A good and devoted wife is always like a mother to her husband, and a loyal husband always banks on his devoted wife like a child clinging to its mother. Lady Macbeth is a very faithful and devoted wife. She bestows all her motherly love on her husband. As a wife she could have dreamt of becoming the queen which Goneril and Regan did: Gertrude remained as queen, Cleopatra dreamt of becoming the empress of the world by her sex and beauty. But what is there in Lady Macebth? She never talks of the crown, never dreams of becoming the queen, but goads her husband to kill Duncan so that he can step into the shoes of Duncan.

Even here she is struck by the strange image of father/daughter : “Had he not resembled / My father as he slept, I had done it” (Act II sc.ii).

Lady Macbeth is not total evil, a fiend or the fourth witch. It is very often argued that as a wife she could have guided her husband, shown him the right track, but she did not. She was more motherly to Macbeth than wifely. And it was because of the absence of any issue. This can be understood when we compare her with Lady Macduff who dotes on her son and is not much bothered about her husband. The essence of motherhood lies in loving others; bestowing her affections on somebody very dear to her heart : living for others. She is like the earth who gives with no hope of getting anything back. Lady Macbeth is like a mother to Macbeth who is blind to his faults. As a wife she could have joined hands with Macbeth and faced the consequences. But the burden of sin is too heavy on her and she breaks down, giving no chance to Macbeth to understand her. After the death of Duncan she remains almost behind the curtain and is no more consulted by Macbeth. She is kept in the dark about the murder of Banquo and Lady Macduff and her son. Even when she dies she dies without Macbeth beside her. The news of her death enrages Macbeth. He cries out, “She should have died hereafter.”(Act Vsc.v). He thinks as if death were at his beck and call. Lady Macbeth was the protectress of Macbeth and with her death Macbeth is left alone in this vast world with nothing to hold on to. Life appears meaningless to him. “A tale/ Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,/ Signifying nothing” (Act V sc.v). His dearest partner who was more of a mother than a life partner is dead, and he lacks the courage to live alone, suffer alone. So it is the utterance of Macbeth in distress and not of Shakespeare of whom life is not a tale told by an idiot…, but wonderful, awaiting new experience at every corner. Lady Macbeth’s life is a tale of suffering and sacrifice. Like a mother she gives everything without any expectation.

Compare this mother without any issue with Lady Macduff, the mother of a child. She appears only in one scene (Act IV sc.ii), and this single scene is enough to study her character. She blames her husband Macduff for leaving her and her son at the time of crisis. She says,

He loves us not :
He wants the natural touch : for the poor wren,
The most diminutive of birds, will fight,
Her young ones in her nest, against the owl.
All is fear, and nothing is love :
As little is the wisdom, where the flight
So runs against all reason. (Act IV sc.ii)

She calls her husband a coward, a traitor, without understanding him. Here is a wife who is confined to her own world; cannot look beyond and does not want to be the dearest partner in her husband's mission. Her conversation with her son reveals her mind. It is not that she wants to keep her son in good humour, it shows how she is unperturbed, unaffected, and indifferent to the happenings in her country and around her. She is not also aware of the fate of her good and noble husband. A woman with a child may be a mother without having motherly qualities; and a woman without a child may be endowed with all the motherly qualities. She is the protectress; she is the possessive mother with ever burning passion to protect her child; ready to sacrifice herself for the child. Her satisfaction lies in seeing her child grow. Lady Macbeth is possessed with that burning passion of a mother who without any issue holds on to Macbeth. She is happy with the happy lot of her husband who banks on her like a child for everything. Strangely enough the play does not have any bedroom scene; no private talks between wife and husband. Whenever we meet them we find Lady Macbeth admonishing her husband, sometimes even taking him to task for not doing his duty.

The play is permeated by the imagery of mother and her issues. The witches forecast Banquo to be the father of a line of kings; the image of a "naked babe" comes to the mind of Macbeth before killing Duncan. Macbeth fears the issues of Banquo, and when Fleance escapes, the second murderer says, "We have lost / The best half of our affair" (Act III sc.iv). The escape of Fleance is the beginning of the end of Macbeth. He raves :

Then comes my fit again : I had else been
perfect; Whole as the marble, Bounded as the rock,
As broad and general as the casing air :
But now, I am cabin'd cribb'd, confin'd, bound in
To saucy doubts and fears. (Ibid)

His restlessness mounts up. The banquet scene shows Macbeth as a man haunted by his own ghost. The fear of the ghost is greater than the ghost itself. It is his sheer obsession with the issues of Banquo and the fear thereof that compels him to kill the innocent child of Macduff. He is at war with issues. Again Macbeth is falsely fortified by two forecasts made by two apparitions, a bloody child and a child crowned with a tree in his hand that no man born of woman can harm Macbeth and secondly, until Birnam wood came to Dunsinane nothing can vanquish Macbeth. *Macbeth* is a unique play of Shakespeare because it is the only play where the hero is haunted by the fear from issues, not of his own, but of others, and the female protagonist, his wife, endowed with all the motherly, qualities, is deprived of any issue of her own, and ultimately bestows everything she has on her husband.

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[3]William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*. Arden Edition, London, p.27. All references to the text are from this edition and are indicated in parentheses.

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❖

MOODS OF LOVE IN BROWNING'S "PIPPA PASSES"

Asmat Jahan

Among the early works of Browning, "Pippa Passes" holds a place of great importance as it signalled a major advance in Browning's growth as a poet and a thinker. Though popularly known as a drama, it was not meant for stage presentation. It was first published in 1841 in the volume entitled *Bells and Pomegranates*. There is no exact information about the sources of the poem. All that is known is that Browning got the inspiration to write such a poem when he was roaming on the streets of Asolo during a visit to Italy in 1838. So, there is a reason to believe that his keen observation of Italian life and people provided him with some rudimentary ideas for the poem.

"Pippa Passes" is considered a remarkable expression of Browning's genius. It is here that for the first time "Browning's voice rings true, and we recognize the poet known to all for his interest in life, his inventive ingenuity in form and manner, and his robust and optimistic spirit".[1] Till now Browning himself had been critical of his poetical works but about "Pippa Passes" he remarked that it was better than anything he had done yet. The poem was initially ignored largely owing to the criticism of "Pauline" and "Sordello" but gradually the poem was rewarded with the recognition that it richly deserved.

"Pippa Passes" appeared at a time when Browning was experimenting with new poetic techniques. He took active interest in the workings of human mind and in the complexities of human nature, which led him to explore human psyche. The notions of love and knowledge vaguely suggested in earlier poems like "Pauline" and "Paracelsus" have been fully elaborated upon in "Pippa Passes". "Pippa Passes" is not a story of one person or one family but

narrates the stories of different individuals and their entirely different fates. The only common link between them is the transformation, which is the result of Pippa's influence. She is the least concerned about the lives of several characters in the poem yet she unconsciously inspires them to do good. Each episode relates a different story and the poem comprises several fragments brought together by the solitary figure of Pippa. All the action takes place in Asolo where Pippa lives as a factory worker and the poem records the events of a single day – the day of Pippa's holiday. She wishes to spend this day as happily as she can. Therefore she plans to pass through the lives of the four eminent persons of Asolo and study their lives by imaginatively putting herself in their place. She is an innocent little girl who knows nothing of the joys and sorrows of others and even of her own. She thinks that Sebald, Jules, Luigi, and Monsignor are living a contented life and regards them as the luckiest four of Asolo but as she passes through their houses, she finds that no one is satisfied with his life.

Whether it is Sebald whose guilt-ridden conscience (because of his indulgence in adultery with Ottima) is tormenting him, or Jules who feels himself cheated in love and is confused regarding his attitude towards Phene (whether to accept her as his bride or forsake her), or Luigi whose love for Italy overcomes his love for his beloved, or Monsignor whose lust for money makes him plan the murder of Pippa whose property he wants to grab. All these characters are on the verge of taking a decision that will determine their future. Here Pippa drops in, singing unconsciously and carelessly without any intention of influencing these characters. But her unconscious utterances awaken the sleeping conscience of these persons and enable them to make a distinction between the right and the wrong. Sebald repenting his deed (his illicit relation with Ottima and the murder of her husband) finds peace in suicide, Jules forgives Phene whole-heartedly and takes her as his bride, Luigi decides to go on his mission without any further delay, and Monsignor decides to return the usurped property to its rightful owner, Pippa. Thus all wrong is righted in the end because of Pippa who, after passing her holiday in her own way, returns to her home and goes to sleep mentally prepared to resume her routine work next day.

Between 1838 and 1842, Browning has been frequently writing on the theme of love and on the role of artist in society. In the poem, the poet examines love from different angles. He not only explores varied moods of love but also looks at human love as the manifestation of divine love. Most of all he shows that the love of humanity reigns supreme. As G. K. Chesterton states, “Pippa Passes” is the greatest poem ever written, with the exception of Walt Whitman, to express the sentiment of the pure love of humanity.”[2] In “Pauline” Browning has presented a poet-lover who is immature and disillusioned and is not quite clear about his attitude towards love whereas in “Paracelsus” he emphasizes that life is incomplete without love and stresses on the synthesis of love and knowledge. In “Pippa Passes” he presents the image of an ideal poet in the form of Pippa who, through her spontaneous utterances, injects feelings of love and humanity in others and inspires them to rise above the selfish self-centredness. The poem beautifully deals with many types of love by relating the experiences of various characters and their response towards love. Chesterton remarks that Browning “had long thought vaguely of a being passing through the world, obscure and unnameable, but moulding the destinies of others to mightier and better issues. Then his almost faultless instinct came in and suggested that this being whom he dramatised as the work-girl, Pippa, should be even unconscious of anything but her own happiness, and should sway men’s lives with a lonely mirth.”[3]

The range and variety is remarkable – the lustful, passionate love of Ottima – Sebald, the soft and ideal love of Jules – Phene, the over – powering patriotic love of Luigi, the typical, maternal love of his mother, the avaricious Bishop’s love of power and riches, love of man for God and above all the love of God for men. Talking about this wide range of love themes in “Pippa Passes”, William David Shaw writes: “The whole structure of the poem is hierarchical, and from the physical, sensual love of Ottima and Sebald, it passes to love with an idealistic basis to Jules and Phene, then to love of country, mother love, and finally the love of God.”[4]

In the Ottima – Sebald episode entitled ‘Morning’, Browning reflects on the purely sensual and physical passion. The two lovers are blindly led by their impulses and murder old Luca

to quench their carnal thirst. They feel that the gratification of the physical urge is the ultimate end of life. After the murder of her husband, Ottima feels liberated like a bird and enjoys her new life of freedom, completely directed by her animal passions. She has no sense of guilt or remorse and bluntly confesses her love for Sebald – the murderer of her husband, "Well then, I love you better now than ever; / And best (look at me while I speak to you) - / Best for the crime; nor do I grieve, in truth" (p.132). When Sebald talks about Luca, she tries to divert his mind by reminding him of the day when they first made love secretly, "Buried in woods we lay, you recollect;/ swift ran the searching tempest overhead;"(p.132). Ottima's love has so blinded Sebald that he forgets every other thing. Ottima is conscious of the power and hold she has on him and orders him, "Crown me your queen, your spirit's arbitress, / magnificent in Sin"(p.133). But such love cannot last for long. It dies soon like a momentary spark of fire. A stage comes when one realizes one's errors. Such realization dawns upon Sebald when he hears Pippa singing, "God's in His Heaven, / All's right with the world" (p.133). The spell is broken and now he sees through the real Ottima and finds her unattractive as she only has the body, not the soul, "My God! / Those morbid olive faultless shoulder – blades - / I should have known there was no blood beneath" (p.133). A new Sebald is born who can no longer be duped by the lust and licentiousness of Ottima.

Ottima also confesses her guilt and is ready to pay the penalty, "Mine is the whole crime. Do but kill me then"(p.133). Both meet a tragic end as they feel that suicide is the only way of escaping the pricking conscience. The poet seems to suggest that lust should not be mistaken for love and one can't hope to live happily by harming others. Selfish and sinful love inevitably brings disaster.

The artist Jules is a sympathetic and loving man. Even after the discovery of the trick played upon him in marriage, he accepts Phene as his wife. It is this acceptance, which enables the couple to lead a happy life. He asks Phene to forget about the past: "Scatter all this my Phene – this mad dream:Who, what is Lutwyche; what Natalia's friends, What the whole world except our love "(p.138).[5]

In Jules’ acceptance of Phene, we may see a compromising attitude towards life. Perfect and complete love is an impossibility. One has to accept life with all its imperfections. Jules accepts this truth and is ready to start a fresh life with Phene: “And you are ever by while I gaze/Are in my arms as now – as now – as now!/ Some unsuspected Isle in the far seas! / Some unsuspected Isle in the far off seas!” (p.138).

Luigi is an embodiment of patriotic love. He has devoted his life for the good of his countrymen and has been fighting for their liberation. He plans to assassinate the corrupt king and thus liberate the people from his tyranny. His mother persuades him to stay on by reminding him of his beloved. He is about to forget his mission when he hears Pippa’s song that tells the story of an old king. This makes him more resolute and he bids farewell and starts on his mission. His love for his country makes him oblivious of his personal concerns. He is young and passionate and could have lived a normal, contented life with his mother and his girlfriend but he can’t think of a settled life when the country is bleeding:

> *I laugh at myself as through the town I walk,*
> *And see merry men as if no Italy were suffering; then I ponder – “I am rich,*
> *Young, healthy; why should this fact trouble me,*
> *More than it troubles these?” but it does trouble (p.139).*

In his sincere devotion to the country, he becomes the finest example of selfless love. Luigi’s mother plays the role of a typical mother who can’t bear to be separated from her child. Love has made her so weak that she wants her son to be with her at any cost. Her love for her son blinds her to the extent that she deliberately tries to delay his departure by talking about his beloved, hoping that he might change his mind: “She must be grown with her blue eyes upturned/As if life were one long and sweet surprise: / In June she comes” (p.140). Although she is well aware of the fact that he is leaving home for a noble cause she wants him to come back to the safety and security of family life fearing that he might be killed during the revolutionary struggle.

The lustful Bishop, Monsignor reminds us of the corrupt clergymen of the Renaissance who never hesitated to misuse their power and authority to enhance their personal

interests. The dishonest Bishop plots against innocent Pippa and plans to grab her wealth and ruin her life. What a coincidence that Pippa's own words spoken unconsciously not only save her but also awaken the sleeping conscience of the Bishop! This is sufficient to show that all the characters have a capacity for self-improvement and are qualified to act a better role in life if the good in them is allowed to assert itself.

Pippa represents the pure, simple love of humanity. She is envious of none. Though deprived of all the pleasures of life, she hopes to feel happy in the happiness of others, "I will pass each, and see their happiness/ And envy none – being just as great, no doubt, / useful to men, and dear to God, as they!"(p.130). Through her songs, she does some good to everyone without being aware of it. The transformation from evil to good in all the characters reveals that her simple human love is triumphant at the end. Browning himself was governed by the love of humanity throughout his life. In "Pauline" and "Paracelsus" too, he has celebrated the victory of human love. Pauline's poet-lover, confused by his ideas regarding knowledge and love, could find no path, no direction to follow. It was in the end that Pauline's love resolved his confusions and he took shelter in love's abode, "No more of this! We will go hand in hand, / I with thee, even as a child - love's slave, / Looking no farther than his liege commands" (p.10). Paracelsus and Aprile fail because they ignore the value of human love and in the words of Festus, no man can succeed if he goes on a path "Which from the first / Produces carelessness to human love?" (p.17). But it is in "Pippa Passes" that selfless love for humanity attains its finest triumph. Pippa is the manifestation of human love. The transformation that she brings about in others shows the triumph of simple human love.

"Pippa Passes" thus becomes a celebration of human love and humanity. The portrayal of an unconscious Pippa healing the spiritually diseased people reminds us of Browning whose poetry is a wonderful exhibition of profound and genuine love for humanity. He believed in the essential goodness of man and presented evil as a part of human life. The poem embodies the poet's passion for the betterment of mankind -- an impulse that directed him throughout his life. It is his keen observation of the joys and sorrows of those

dwelling around him that inspires him to unveil the mysteries of the universe. Pippa presents the image of an ideal poet who unknowingly assumes the role of a leader and a torch-bearer, and leads the erring persons to the right path. Her songs inspire everyone to suppress their baser selves and to do some good to others. ‘The Negative Capability’ of Pippa influences those who hear her songs and they try to free themselves from the clutches of their narrow selves. Pippa’s passing awakens the conscience of individuals hitherto enslaved by self interest ... In each case the ultimate decision negates personal inclination and so discredits the materialistic values endorsed by society.

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All quotations are taken from G. Robert Stange ed. *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning* (1974, Houghton Miffin Company: Boston) and are indicated in parentheses.

[1]W.C.Devane, *A Browning Handbook*, (N.Y., 1935) p.88

[2]G.K. Chesterton, *Robert Browning*, (N.Y, 1964) p.43

[3]Ibid.,p. 43

[4]William David Shaw, *The Dialectical Temper* (New York: 1968), p. 52

[5]Such ideas about love are echoed in “Pauline” too where the poet–lover after realizing the importance of love implores: “Pauline, come with me, see how I could build/ A home for us, out of the world in thought/ I am uplifted: fly with me Pauline!”

SUPRAMENTAL TRANSFORMATION THROUGH THE CREATIVE MODE: A READING OF SRI AUROBINDO'S *THE FUTURE POETRY*

Sumita Roy

I

All streams of human endeavour today seem to converge at a point where the human consciousness is explored to achieve a balanced perception of the experiential reality; a reality which appears, with our limited tools of analysis, fragmented, incomplete, obscure, ridden with strife and conflicts, contradictions and more or less leading to stagnation. Such a situation is abhorrent to nature, where evolution, especially that of the mind, is the necessity of all sentient beings.

As we prepare to step into the twenty-first century we find that scientists, psychologists and psychiatrists, artists, thinkers and practitioners of the spirit are all involved in the attempt to understand the brain and mind, to expand the dimensions of human consciousness in order to chart newer areas of human achievement than the ones that are available at present. Herbert Benson (1987:16), M.D. of the Harvard Medical School enumerates the methods through which a person can establish contact with what he so succinctly terms "the Maximum Mind" and ratifies his scientific data, surprisingly, by quoting the words of the Dalai Lama, a famous experimenter of the spiritual realm and says:

> *The Dalai Lama, a great student of the human mind as well as the spiritual leader of the Tibetan Buddhists, once said, "We human beings have a developed brain and limitless potential. Since even wild animals can gradually be trained with patience, the human mind also can gradually be trained, step*

> *by step. With patience, you can come to know this through your own experience." As the Dalai Lama suggests, the brain is a most wonderful part of the human anatomy. Yet it's also most mysterious. (3)*

Therefore, this immense potential combined with the mystery surrounding the mental processes has made this engrossing subject an area of constant attention and analysis. The result is a superimposition of data from the outer world of sense perception and the intuitively felt inner landscape which is available to the experimentation of and explication by spiritual seekers such as, among others, the Dalai Lama and Sri Aurobindo.

II

Sri Aurobindo, an eminent thinker, philosopher and practising artist, devoted almost all his lifelong efforts to studying, inferring from and explicating the workings of the human mind; his aim was to outline the possibilities of its integral evolution to reach what he called the Supermind. This doctrine forms the cornerstone of Sri Aurobindo's thought and has received wide attention. In this connection it would be appropriate to read Sri Aurobindo's own words regarding the process of evolution: “evolution means a bringing out of new powers which lay concealed in the seed or the first form; the simple develops to the more complex, -- more complex even in some apparent simplicity, -- the superficial gives place to the greater nature of the common manifestation.”

This being the crux of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga seeks the conjunction of all experiential reality to form that complete and cognitive picture of truth which has been the object of human quest since time immemorial. One can say that Darwin's pioneering conclusions in the field of human evolution gave impetus to the hypotheses of all who had already been engaged in mapping the progress of the human species in various directions. And for all who came after him his theory served as a foundation to begin their edifice.

Sri Aurobindo's experiences, for instance, of mental levels other than those ordinarily available to average people convinced him that every activity of life needs to be directed towards the achievement of these levels; that it is within the

grasp of every aspiring individual; and that it is the only way in which the next stage in evolution can be concretised. In his view no part of human experience is to be negated or ignored in the path of evolution. Therefore, according to him, the levels which are termed as "lower" are themselves the springboards for a leap into the higher reaches of evolution. And, being a poet, he concluded that the creative mode was one of the most viable ones in this "ascent".

III

In an insightful critique of Sri Aurobindo's thought Prema Nandakumar (1988:76) suggested that "the Aurobindonian theory of overhead aesthesis appears to have a sufficient and inner logic of its own that is rather lacking in most other theories of poetry." That is to say, for Sri Aurobindo poetry, his criticism of poetry and the role he visualises for future poetry, is not an end in itself, but a means to that end which was the task of his life. His view of poetry from this perspective --"as a part of your sadhana" (in his own words) -- is put forward in one of his letters where he states that: “Poetry can start from any plane of consciousness although like all art -- or, one might say, all creation -- it must always come through the vital if it is to be alive . . . inspiration comes from the linking of the vital creative instrument to a deeper psychic experience . . .” (1972 : 300)

The idea of poetry as sadhana is noteworthy as it invests the activity with a sanctified dimension. But the demands of an age dominated by science and reason made him use more "acceptable" terminology and he said: “ poetry is a psychological phenomenon, the poetic impulse a highly charged force of expression of the mind and the soul of man, and therefore in trying to follow out its line of evolution it is the development of the psychological motive and power.” (181)

Sri Aurobindo, of course, spoke of poetry also as Mantra when he said: “what we might call the mantra in poetry rises at once from the heart of the seer and from the distant home of the Truth -- the discovery of the word, the divine movement [that] . . . "lies in the apprehension of a something stable behind the instability of word and deed . . . something that is a dim shadowing of the Divine urge which is

prompting all creation to unfold itself and to rise out of its limitations towards its God-like possibilities." (9)

Since poetry has been the mode of expression from the earliest times, Sri Aurobindo seeks classical support for his formulations: “The ancient Indian critics defined the essence of poetry as *rasa* and by that word they meant a concentrated taste, a spiritual essence of emotion, an essential aesthesis, the soul's pleasure in the pure and perfect sources of feeling.”(233)

One of the first injunctions laid down for poetry to be *Mantra* is its activation of the visual aspect. Attitudes and more specially the "capacity for encounter", that is, taking up the challenge of attitudes and upholding them courageously, thus, play a crucial role in the process of evolution. In Sri Aurobindo's integral vision this preoccupation with the necessary prerequisite of attitudes has to be applied to every aspect of human existence, which includes the poetic one, too. For instance, in his view poetry is that which "expresses the experience, the vision, the ideas. . . of the higher and wider soul . . . it opens to us by the word the doors of the Spirit." (14) This is not the characteristic attitude that average individuals have towards poetry or any other creative form. For them Sri Aurobindo explicates the significance of the creative mode by saying:

> *The rhythmic word has a subtly sensible element, its sound value, a quite immaterial element, its significance or thought value and both of these again, its sound and its sense, have separately and together a soul value, a direct spiritual power . . . and this form of speech carries in it an element which draws close to the empire of the ineffable. (11-12)*

Of course, all poetry does not aspire to or come anywhere near this level of excellence. Poetry's aesthetic function often obscures other concerns. Sri Aurobindo, in his characteristic positivist stance takes up this dimension and builds on it to reach the goal of supramental evolution. For him "poetry has not really done its work, at least its highest work, until it has raised the pleasure of the instrument and transmuted it into the deeper delight of the soul.(11) Once this dimension of creativity is accepted then the writing as well as reading of a

poem becomes true sadhana. It is not as if the need for this elevated dimension of poetry has not been felt. Sri Aurobindo analyses the existing conditions and concludes that: “The mind of man, a little weary now of the superficial pleasure of the life and intellect, demands, obscurely still, not yet perceiving what will satisfy it, a poetry of the joy of self, or the deeper beauty and delight of existence. A mere cultured poetry fair in form and word and playing on the surface strings of mind and emotion will not serve its purpose.” (236)

This is because the human individual has come out of the rigid mould of rational and empirical responses to experience and is ready to admit the possibilities of other, hitherto untapped, sources of the mind. This leads Sri Aurobindo to catalogue the diversity of poetic response and come up with the suggestion that the soul is the recipient of the true poetic delight, which is the end genuine poetry aims for:

> *neither the intelligence, the imagination nor the ear are the true or at least the deepest or the highest recipients of the poetic delight, even as they are not its true or highest creators; they are only its channels and instruments: the true creator, the true hearer is the soul. (11)*

But for all poetry to actualise this and appeal to the hearer -- the soul -- is not easy to conceive. Therefore, the distinction between ordinary poetry and "real" or "high" poetry becomes imperative:

> *the whole style and rhythm of poetry are the expression and movement which come from us out of a certain spiritual excitement caused by a vision in the soul of which it is eager to deliver itself...then we get the real, the high poetry. (15)*

To evaluate the poetic worth of a piece of work it is necessary to remember that the creative endeavour which aids evolution must relate to the human consciousness at " that point where pleasure passes into or is rather drowned in the pure spiritual Ananda, the ecstasy of the creative, poetic revelation." (26) The poet's role and responsibility in the

progress of supramental transformation is, from these points of view, immense:

> *For the great poet interprets to man his present or reinterprets for him his past, but can also point him to his future and in all three reveals to him the face of the Eternal. (197)*

Sri Aurobindo identifies for us those requisites of vision, sight and insight which make an artist create genuine, meaningful and value-oriented verse: “the greatest poets have been those who have had a large and powerful interpretative and intuitive vision . . . and whose poetry has arisen out of that in a supreme revelatory utterance of it.” (27)

The poetic personality subordinates itself to the urgency of his inspiration and the predominant urge to express his vision cancels out his egocentric behavioural patterns, as Sri Aurobindo points out: “At the highest he himself disappears into sight; the personality of the seer is lost in the eternity of the vision, and the Spirit of all seems alone to be there speaking out sovereignly its own secrets.” (33)

To acknowledge the presence of the Spirit, and allow it to be heard above the controlled and conditioned opinions of the human mind requires that a dual personality of the poet be held in equipoise. Now the question arises as to how this magic, this alchemy becomes possible. And here is a major contribution of Sri Aurobindo in his contention that evolution results in higher poetry which in turn serves as the stepping stone for the next stage of evolution, thus marking a more or less symbiotic course of human progress. He says that : “poetic vision, like everything else, follows necessarily the evolution of the human mind." (33) In fact, the attainment of this necessary quality through the confluence of poetry and evolution has to come by self-effort as Sri Aurobindo stresses: "A distinct spiritual turn, the straining towards a deeper, more potent, supra-intellectual and supravital vision of things is [the] innermost secret of creative power." (151)

IV

In this way Sri Aurobindo expresses his vision of the future and sketches a map of supramental transformation using the poetic endeavour as an instrument. He says:

> *The human mind is opening to an unprecedented largeness of vision of the greatness of the worlds, the wonder of life, the self of man, the mystery of the spirit in him and the universe. The future poetry must seek in that vision its inspiration, and the greater its universality of joy in existence, the more it seeks through intuitive sight and aesthesis the deepest fountains of poetic delight and beauty, the more it will become powerfully creative of a greater life for the race. (236)*

Under these circumstances the human species is ascribing more importance to an expansion of the frontiers of the mind. Religion provides the kind of framework which can meet these demands adequately as long as faith is not ousted by doubt and confusion: “the essence of religion is an aspiration and adoration of the soul towards the Divine . . . because of this greater affinity philosophy, psychic and spiritual science and religion are found in the ancient Indian culture woven into one unity, and when they turn to the expression of their most intimate experience, it is always the poetic word which they use.” (208)

Therefore, one cannot overlook the high destiny of poetry which he saw as "mediation between the truth of the spirit and the truth of life" which "will be one of the chief functions of the poetry of the future." (199)

Sri Aurobindo's predictions of this nature, for instance his words: "what the [coming] age will aim at is neither materialism nor an intuitive vitalism nor a remote detached spirituality, but a harmonious and luminous totality of man's being" (189) are authenticated by his personal life and experiences, both as a seer and a poet. As Ghatak (1988 : 16) put it:

> *Himself a poet or seer Sri Aurobindo has realised how a poet's inner being acts in creation …the most perfect poetry comes when the original source pours its inspiration pure into the vital and there takes its true form and power of speech . . . what it receives from the inner or the superior spaces.*

The result of such a journey is bliss or Ananda, which has been the end of most spiritual explorations and Sri Aurobindo rightly suggests that this is the summit which is

scaled by a genuine poet. Since such is the role and privilege of the poet in this essential process of evolution Sri Aurobindo predicts the course of poetry in the future which will assure the right footage to human evolution. And he noted this almost half a century ago:

> *The poetry of the future . . . taking the highest as its keynote and interpreting the rest in its intensity and largeness, will offer to the human mind a more complex aesthetic and spiritual satisfaction, express a more richly filled content of self-experience raised to a more persistent sight of things absolute and infinite and a more potent and all-comprehending release into the calm and delight of the spirit. (241)*

This does not imply a total divorce from the poetic mode current during his time. He adds with care and caution that though he is advocating a momentous transformation it does not have to rise phoenix-like, out of the ashes of the older mode. In fact, he suggests that:

> *The opening of the creative mind into an intuitive and revelatory poetry need not of itself compel a revolution and total breaking up of the old forms and a creation of altogether new moulds; it may be effected for the most part by an opening up of new potentialities in old instruments and a subtle inner change of their character. (245)*

In other words, the gradual alteration of usable tools replacing older ones with more effective ones, discarding vestigial organs or adapting them to suit the changing needs, these are the subtle modes of aspiration towards the Supermind. Sounding a modern note and anticipating what many thinkers of the next generation would articulate, Sri Aurobindo advocated the concepts of oneness and totality which have today assumed the status of popular global slogans:

> *The poetry which voices the oneness and totality of our being and Nature and the worlds and God, will not make the actuality of our earthly life less but more real and rich and full and wide and living to men. (224)*

Thus, Sri Aurobindo assigns to poetry a holistic function which, in his view, will automatically propel the human species on the path of supramental evolution and therefore fulfil the task which he assigns to it.

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ANTITHETICAL PATTERNS IN UPAMANYU CHATTERJEE'S *ENGLISH,AUGUST*

Mukesh Ranjan Verma

The full title of Upamanyu Chatterjee's maiden novel that was published in 1988 runs as *English, August : An Indian Story*. It is the antithesis between 'English' and 'Indian" that strikes the reader first, and this, in a way, also suggests the nature of the conflict in the novel. There are, however, several other antitheses in the novel that create patterns of meaning. It is the story of a metropolitan, upper middle class young man who has to undergo his training as an I.A.S. officer at a small provincial town. Agastya Sen, the son of a Governor, who has spent his life in two metropolises of India, Delhi and Calcutta, has so far been living an insular life centring around English literature, Western philosophy, music, soft drug and fantasies of women. Madna, where he has to have his training, is typical of the hundreds of small towns of India which have a sleepy look and a parochial outlook. The novelist hints at the incompatibility of these two worlds at the very beginning of the novel when Agastya is going from Delhi to Madna :

> *Hundreds of kilometres of a familiar yet unknown landscape, seen countless times through train windows, but never experienced – his life till then had been profoundly urban. Shabby stations of small towns where the train didn't stop, the towns that looked nice from a train window, incurious patient eyes and weather beaten bicycles at a level crossing, muddy children and buffalo at a waterhole. To him, these places had been at best names out of newspapers, where floods and caste wars occurred, and entire Harijan families were murdered, where some prime minister took his helicopter just after a calamity, or just before the elections. Now he looked out at this remote world and felt a little unsure, he*

> *was going to spend months in a dot in this hinterland.[1] (4-5)*

His apprehensions are confirmed at his very first encounter with Madna where he reaches at night. The small cigarette and paan shops lit by kerosene lamps, cattle and rickshaws jostling together on the road, over flowing drains, trucks splashing muddy water all around – he faces a world which he had never experienced. The government rest house where he has to stay during his probation has also nothing to put him at ease. Children of various sizes who all seemed to breathe through their mouths throng at the door of his room. The dinner is awful and the large number of mosquitoes, even though he sleeps under a mosquito net, give him a swollen face in the morning. All this gives him a feeling of unreality – "he felt as though he was living someone else's life".(5)

The day Agastya is to depart for Madna, his close friend, Dhrubo tells him, "I've a feeling, August you're going to get hazaar fucked in Madna". (1) This mongrel of Urdu and English, 'hazaar fucked', aptly describes how he, in fact, does feel there. The problem with Agastya is that he cannot relate to Madna, not just the place but the kind of life he has to lead there. He is not a phony. Nor is he a ridiculous copy of the westernized Indian, some one like Mandy in the novel. The reason for his alienation in Madna lies in the fact that he belongs to that breed of urban Indians who find nothing in common with the rest of India. Kumar, the superintendent of police in Madna, tells him that he looks the ' English type'. When he expresses his surprise, Kumar says, "Any Indian who speaks English more fluently than he speaks any Indian language I call the English type". (23) When the Englishman, John Avery, visits Madna with his wife to see the obscure memorial of his grandfather who had been the district collector of Madna during the British days, the officials of Madna wait for August, who is away to Delhi, to take care of the couple. Thus people of Madna also look upon him as a class apart.

Upamanyu Chatterjee creates the antithesis between Agastya's past life and his present life at Madna by interspersing events from his boarding school days or his university days in Delhi or from his life in Calcutta with his activity at Madna.

The nicknaming of 'August' from Agastya by his friends in Delhi, though nothing unusual among college boys, shows the kind of metamorphosis that his persona underwent. Born in a traditional Bengali family he was given a traditional name from the Hindu mythology. Agastya, the sage who figures both in the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* could, with his spiritual powers, push the mountain back. Agastya, his modern namesake, grows so lethargic after taking his daily dose of marijuana that he has no desire to exert his will one way or the other. The only occasion on which he does so is when as the B.D.O. of Jompana he visits the tribal area of Chipanthi which is hit by acute shortage of water. He forces the Deputy Engineer, Chaudhri and his subordinates, who have readymade official excuses for not doing their duty, to go and bring the tanker of water the same day to Chipanti. This strong reaction in him is partly the product of the moving sight of small children going deep inside the lone dirty well of the village and bringing half bucketful of muddy water from there, in the process of which they are bruised, and partly the desire to make the callously irresponsible officials, to behave responsibly at least this once. About this act of August, Upamanyu Chatterjee says in an interview :

> *The whole water issue is his first outward movement. But not in a dramatic way ; it is just the hint of looking outward. Even though he is longing to be self–absorbed, events in themselves can pull a person out, yes I hope that was cautiously suggested though.*[2]

Even this incident proves merely an occasional stir in the otherwise placid self–cocooned existence of Agastya at Madna where he responds to the people and activities around him with his outer self only, keeping his inner self inviolate. That is why he fails to relate to Madna, even after a stay of nearly a year there.

In the character of Madhusudan Sen, Agastya's father, Upamanyu Chatterjee presents an antithesis to Agastya. Madhusudan Sen, a distinguished I.C.S. officer of the yester years, who had been Home Secretary and Chief Election Commissioner, is presently the Governor of West Bengal. With this spectacular career graph goes a rich personality. Agastya says about him to Sathe : "He's amazing, he eats corned beef sandwiches and wears dhotis and reads the

Upanishads in Sanskrit"(281). About Agastya, the novelist tells us : "He had no devouring interests, and until he came to Madna, very little ambition"(4). Madhusudan Sen had anticipated the first reaction of Agastya to Madna and had told him that his job would give him glimpses of "other situations and existences which might initially prove startling" (94). So when he learns about his unhappiness in Madna, he is not surprised, but only a little saddened. He writes to him: "But remember that Madna is not an alien place, you must give it time. I think you will like your job eventually, but if you don't, think concretely of what you want to do instead, and change." (25)

In his second letter Madhusudan Sen tells Agastya about his own reaction when he had gone to the Konkan after joining the I.C.S. :"Madna must have placed your Delhi and Calcutta in perspective, it must have. The same happened with me when I was in the Konkan, forty years ago. But I suppose my reactions were different from yours. After Presidency College, the konkan was a wonderful surprise ". (149)

Agastya lacks his father's ability to respond to life's variety. He cannot look beyond the groove that he has created for himself. Despite his non-serious attitude towards most of the things, his flippant observations and glib remarks, he lacks the basic sense of humour to take the things in their right perspective, a sense of humour that teaches man that it takes all kinds to make the world, that living means taking life in all its spectrum. That is why Madna breeds a kind of frustration in him :

> *Agastya was enraged at himself, for agreeing to the afternoon, for being in Madna, for a job that compelled him to be polite to Srivastav and his wife, for being in the job he was, for not having planned his life with intelligence, for having dared to believe that he was adaptable enough to any job and circumstance, for not knowing how to change either, for wasting a life. (112)*

Another character in the novel that creates an antithesis to Agastya is Baba Ramanna, the founder of Baba Ramanna Rehabilitation Home of Lepers in Madna. Agastya first hears of him when he comes to know that Baba Ramanna has refused the government help for his Home, not that he does

not need it but because it would inevitably bring the government interference in the working of his Home which would only mean disaster for the Home. When a not so enthusiastic Agastya visits the Home, he is impressed by what he sees there. He does not meet the seventy seven year old Baba but his son, Raman Karanth, who takes him round the Home.

It is from him that he knows the story of the Baba. Shankaran Karanth, now popularly called Baba Ramanna, who was a doctor who had a lucrative medical practice in Bangalore forty years ago. Like most of similar stories that have created legends, the story of Baba Ramanna's life is the story of the renunciation of home for the realization of an ideal which in his case was the service of lepers, that section of humanity which was discarded even by the family and friends. Shankaran Karanth had realized that lepers needed not only medical help but also psychological help to restore their self-respect and self-confidence. This drew him to Madna, a place far away from Bangalore, but where land was cheap and the water table was high, and because of the famous temple at Gorapak there was a congregation of lepers there. His dedicated labour of all those years is now reflected in the cleanliness of the place, the organized life that the inmates of the Home lived and the self-confidence and zeal for life that they showed. Agastya's visit to the Rehabilitation Home leaves a deep but mixed impact on him :

> *Baba Ramanna's achievement had seemed inhuman, almost monstrous as Agastya stared at the fields and orchards, and the two wells, phoenixes that the Baba had helped to rise in triumph out of barrenness, he felt a little sick – at the immensity of a human ambition, but also at its nobility and virtue, at the limitlessness of the potential of human endeavour, but also the infinite patience and craft required to bring the endeavour to fruition . (235 – 6)*

Though Agastya talks of the limitlessness of the potential of human endeavour and realizes the importance of infinite patience in that endeavour, he himself shows no urge for it. He complains against almost every one in Madna. He seems disgruntled at everything. The work that he is supposed to learn does not interest him. One reason that he gives for it is

that he does not understand the local language and so what transpires in different offices remains incomprehensible to him. He, however, makes no effort to learn the language in all those months, despite Srivastav, the district collector suggesting him to do so at the very beginning of his stay at Madna. His concept of ideal life seems to be living in a metropolis, smoking marijuana, reading Marcus Aurelius, listening to music, either Western or Rabindra Sangeet and fantasizing about women. His uncle Paltukaku rebukes him for, what he considers, his irresponsible attitude towards life:

> *And you want to leave the I.A.S., no less, after having been just a few months in the job. Disgusting. It would've been like your father wanting to leave the Indian Civil Service. For what ? Not for a cause – Subhash Chandra Bose or somebody like that – but to be happy, you said this morning, all I want is to be happy. What you need is a whipping, I think your father is trying to be too reasonable. Sitting there at the Calcutta Raj Bhawan playing his silly games of patience, he attributes to you far more sense than you possess. You don't seem to like your place of posting because it is not Calcutta or Delhi, and it doesn't have fast food joints selling you hamburgers. You have always known security, that's why you're behaving so shallowly. (161 – 62)*

There is nothing wrong in a person's search for happiness, nor can his decision to give up his job be termed irresponsible merely because it is a coveted job. Many others have done so. But in their case they have generally been clear about their alternatives and preferences. In the case of Agastya this decision is governed by a negative – what he does not want. But it is not clear to him what he wants in its place. He thinks of joining Tonic's publishing firm, but, as Paltukaku tells him, he thinks of it only because it will give him a chance to live in Delhi. He knows nothing about publication, nor has he any interest in it.

In contrast to Agastya, his friend Dhrubo is fed up with his job in Citibank. He is preparing for the I.A.S. examination. He is afraid that if he does not take the decision now, he might have to repent it at some later date. One person in the novel who knows what he wants in life and has chosen his path consciously and is happy about it is Govind Sathe, the

cartoonist who is known as the joker of Madna. In this regard, he presents yet another antithesis to Agastya. Govind's father was outraged when he declared his decision to become a cartoonist, but he stuck to it. When Agastya meets him, he is an established cartoonist whose cartoons are published in four Marathi dailies, all published from Bombay and Pune. Agastya is surprised to hear this and asks him what he is doing in Madna. Govind's response is significant : "Why, I like this place'. Sathe laughed and had to put down his cup because he couldn't restrain himself 'With a question like that you really reveal yourself, Mr Sen, your past, your bewilderment and boredom. Aren't you surprised at seeing me in Madna, I wear Levi's and read "Yes Minister"?" (43 –44)

Later in the novel, he tells Agastya that he could not live in a metropolis like Mumbai because there he felt lost. Madna for him is the home. For Agastya the search is still on. However, he is honest enough to realize that he could not remain in the I.A.S. merely because it was a coveted job and lent one a kind of social prestige. That is why, he decides to take a year off, like Drubo's American, to discover himself.

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MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP IN SYLVIA PLATH

Shahneela Kausar

Sylvia Plath is a very significant creative writer of American Literature. The popularity of her works and their influence have been wide spread all over the English speaking world. She has written in her very brief creative career of about six years over two hundred poems and an autobiographical novel *The Bell Jar*. In addition to them she has also written a collection of stories and prose piece *Johny Panic and the Bible of Dreams*. I have made a modest attempt in this paper to analyse Sylvia Plath's relationship to her mother. While a lot has been written on Sylvia Plath's Electra-Complex and her intense emotional attachment to her father, very little has been analyzed how she reacts in respect of her mother. It is to be noted in this connection that her father died when she was hardly nine year old and her stay with her mother was for a very long period till she decided to marry Ted Hughes. This inter-personal relationship between her and her mother may, therefore, enlighten many aspects of her creative works. It is also evident from the long introduction written by her mother to her posthumously published *Letters Home.*

As Sylvia Plath is a Confessional writer, so a little bit of her biography is essential to understand her creative process. When her father was alive, she was his darling daughter and she did every thing to please her daddy. When a brother was born to her, her mother naturally became more engaged to the newly born son, leaving the much desired time for the daughter to play with her father in his study room. Being a Professor of Biology at Boston University, her father created in her a lot of interest in insects. Many poems that Plath wrote later on bees, are testimony to her creative gift to her father. But when her father died because of an untreated diabetes, she was left high and dry. It was not only a blow at the emotional level, it was also a severe economic upset. As her father had left very little money, her mother had to sell

her big house in a posh locality and buy a smaller one in a different surrounding lower in social scale. This financial upset put so much of a burden on her mother, who was earning only a few dollars per week as a typist, that she had to impress all the time upon Sylvia Plath to read day and night and win some scholarship. Thus Plath was left with no time to mourn the loss of her father. Being a very brilliant student and studious too, she won straight A's all through her academic life, but it played havoc with her nerves. She had to become, under compulsion, "tight and nervy as the top string of a violin"[1].

From a daddy's darling with enough stock of fun, Sylvia was untimely transformed into, "a dissatisfied satisfier of other people's expectations."[2] Yet, all the time her mother was upon her to excel further, resulting finally into Plath's mental break-down. This excessive pressure exerted on her created a sense of hostility in her heart for her mother. Later in life when her marriage with Ted Hughes was on the rocks, Sylvia Plath wanted to bear this trauma alone. But as a concerned mother, Mrs. Aurelia Plath used to take interest in her affairs through regular letters and finally through a personal visit to England at Devonshire where Plath was living with Ted. Such motherly interferences only created chasm between Plath and her mother. While there are several references of affectionate love for her father in her creative writing, these references are singularly missing in respect of her mother.

The Bell Jar is so bitterly critical of her mother and other mother substitutes (Mrs. Willard etc.) that when it was published in 1963, it was not published in America but in England far away from her friends and relatives. Years later, it was published in U.S.A. and was immediately branded as "a profile done in thick charcoal"[3] and the expression of the "basest ingratitude"[4].

The Bell Jar upon its publication in America became a sort of *Bible* for all high school and college going girls because they identified themselves entirely with Esther Greenwood, the heroine of the novel. As this is an autobiographical novel, Esther is actually Sylvia Plath during her adolescent year. All through the novel, the heroine is haunted by fear of failure because she has to show success after success with no trace of failure at all to her mother and her society.

Because of her personal liking, Esther has opted for English major during her early college years. But her mother is always pressurizing her to learn typewriting and short hand in addition to other subjects. Her mother does not want that she should be unemployed even for a single day when her college years are over. But Esther wants to become a creative writer and, thus, for her learning mechanical typewriting and shorthand are quite painful. It is her mother's wish that she has to date with Buddy Willard, the most suitable bachelor for her, according to her mother's choice. Esther's affair with Buddy ends in fiasco when she learns of his other dalliance. This also creates a sense of animosity between her and her mother because Buddy was the only son of her mother's friend Mrs. Willards. Her hostility towards her mother becomes clear when she finds Mrs Greenwood sleeping. Esther cannot sleep herself because of her mental tension coupled with the snoring of her mother: "The piggish noise irritated me, and for a while it seemed to me that the only way to stop it would be to take the column of skin and sinew from which it rose and twist it to silence between my hands."[5]

Another reference to her hostility to her mother comes out again when she mistakes the many pins in the hair of Mrs Greenwood as glittering "like a row of little bayonets" (p. 129) baying for her blood. This animosity comes on the surface several times in the novel. Esther ascribes her mental breakdown to her mother's constant insistence on success and prudish behaviour. She can not tolerate the many platitudes which always fill her young innocent mind. All the social pressures exaggerated by her mother's insistence makes her a terrified, "baby in the Bell Jar"[6]. Esther's inimical attitude towards her mother increases manifold, she is subjected to electric shocks in the clinic of Doctor Gordon. She screams for her life every time the electric shock is administered to her; she thinks it to be a punishment given to her by her own mother for her misconduct. Yet she fails to understand why such a cruel torture should be given, "I wondered what terrible thing it was that I had done" (p. 152).

There is a close co-relation between her novel and her poetry. At one level her novel is an extension of her poetry. Central themes, major tone and texture are almost the same, thus one can easily think of "inter disciplinary relevance"[7]

between her verse and prose. The same bitter references to her mother comes in poems like 'All the Dead Dears', 'The Disquieting Muses', 'Poem For a Birthday' and finally in 'Medusa'. In 'All the Dead Dears' there is a reference to mother who is already dead. As she is already dead so she extends her cold 'hands' from the coffin to 'haul' her in, thus terrifying her no end. 'In The Disquieting Muses' the poet is critical of the role models set by her mother for her: "I learned I learned I learned elsewhere / From muses unhired by you dear mother."[8]

In 'Poem For a Birthday' which is a sequence of many small poems the poet is alarmed at the hostility of her mother. Although loved dearly by her father, the presence of her mother destroys all the show and then even the old father turns out completely ineffective: "The mother of mouths didn't love me./The old man shrank to a doll. / O I am too big to go backward;" (p.133).

The most important poem to point out her bitterness for her mother is 'Medusa'. Medusa is a potent symbol of a hydra, a sea monster with a very large mouth ready to suck others blood. In another mythological reference, Medusa is a ferocious creature with poisonous snakes, her stare is petrifying. So comparing the mother with Medusa itself indicates how much gall is there in the heart of Sylvia Plath for her mother. In the earlier part of this paper it has already been pointed out that Sylvia did not like this imposing role of her mother. In this poem she wants a complete freedom from this straining relationship and wants a complete break-up with her. She calls the mother-figure "fat and red" placenta. Despite her eagerness to break away, the mother is completely unwilling to give her up. A desperate poet therefore cries out against her mother calling her many names: "Paralysing the kicking lovers./ Cobra light / Squeezing the breath from the blood bells / Of the fuchsia. (p.225) When the mother figure is not slackening her vicious grip over her, the poet finally severs all her ties with her: "Off, Off eely tentacle / There is nothing between us."(p. 226) The last line, indicating that there is nothing between them, is sufficient to suggest that the creative relationship between the mother and daughter is very troublesome. Yet no reader should have the freedom to equate Plath the poet with Plath

the person, for as Andrienne Rich points out that in such cases what is important is to appreciate the delicate balancing of the "energy of creation and the energy of relation."[9]

Otherwise also, Plath is not totally immune to motherly love even in her creative writing. In *The Bell Jar*, Esther Greenwood does not accept either her mother or mother-substitutes like Mrs. Willard and Philomena Guinea. Mrs. Willard is unacceptable to her because she also utters the same set of platitudes as the one repeated by her own mother. Mrs. Philomena Guinea and her name is quite suggestive as it represents the rat race of success that has brought on Esther the mental breakdown. But in the same novel there is a mother-surrogate, Doctor Nolan, who is always appreciated by her. Doctor Nolan treats her mental case at Belsize after Doctor Gordon has failed to cure Esther at his own hospital. Doctor Nolan represents the liberal, understanding type of mother-figure and treats Esther with a doctor's skill but mother's care and concern. She allows Esther to express her pent-up anger to the full and, instead of putting her directly on shock-therapy, she slowly treats her on insulin. And finally, when shock is needed, she personally accompanies her with a doctor's assurance and mother's affection, that her shock treatment would not be painful at all. This motherly feeling is temporarily transferred on to Mrs. Bannister, the attending nurse, when she brings for Esther a glass of milk. Esther relishes the hot milk on her tongue "as it went down, tasting it luxuriously, the way a baby tastes its mother." (p. 213)

In her poetry, love for the mother is largely absent, but her own motherly feeling is at its full play in such poems as ‘Three Women’ and 'The Night Dances’. In the first poem, the innocent image of the unborn baby armours a mother against all labour pain. In the second poem, she is simply overwhelmed by the movements in sleep of her newly born baby: “Such pure leaps and spirals / Surely they travel / The world for ever, I shall not entirely / Sit emptied of beauties, the gift/ Of your small breath, the drenched grass /Small of your sleeps, lilies, lilies.” (pp. 249-50)

In the final analysis, therefore, the mother-daughter relationship in Plath is not a simple but subtle phenomena. It

is this complexity of relationship that enriches the creativity of Plath, adding additional aesthetic attraction and enjoyment to her work.

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OEDIPA'S NIGHT JOURNEY IN PYNCHON'S *THE CRYING OF LOT 49*

Prasanta Das

A common feature in the novels of Thomas Pynchon, including *Vineland* (1990), is the night journey. In *V.* (1963) there are two night journeys: Hugh Godolphin's quest for Vheissu, a quest that parodically echoes Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*; and Profane's descent into the sewer system of New York, a comic and an asymbolic episode in Pynchon's postmodern novel (whereas a comparable situation in Richard Wright's "The Man Who Lived Underground" proves to be highly symbolic). In *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) Slothrop, in a parodic diminution of the Orpheus myth, climbs down a toilet in search of a lost harp. And at the end of *Vineland*, its villain, Brock Vond, is about to be ferried across the last river into the country of death. Here too the treatment is basically inverted, as reflected in Vato's final words to Vond : "Give these third-worlders a chance, you know, they can be a lotta fun.[1] In contrast, Oedipa's night journey in *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) is a genuinely nightmarish experience and is "the only episode in the book that is most conspicuously free of parody.[2] This contrast becomes all the more striking when one realises that there is in fact an inversion of the night journey in *Lot 49* also, but in this novel the reversal is not motivated by any parodic or subversive intent.

Oedipa's dilemma is whether the mysterious Tristero exists or not. "Either the Tristero did exist, in its own right, or it was being presumed, perhaps phantasied by Oedipa, so hung up on and interpenetrated by the dead man's estate."[3] Oedipa decides to settle the question of the Tristero's objective existence by deliberately setting out on a night journey.

"Here in San Fransisco, away from all the tangible assets of that estate, there still might be a chance of getting the whole thing to go away and disintegrate quietly."(Ibid.109) It is almost as if this ex-English student has decided to confirm the reality of the Tristero by opting for a rather Goodman Brown-like journey : "She had only to drift tonight, at random, to be convinced it was purely nervous, a little something for her shrink to fix"(Ibid). The primary convention of the night journey form requires that "the geographic dimension be a projection of the inner dimension."[4] Oedipa clearly inverts this convention for she hopes that her night journey will reveal to her signs of the Tristero's independent geographic existence and thereby prove that the Tristero is *not* a mental or an imaginary projection.

As the definitive examples of Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" and Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* indicate, the results of night journeys in American literature are often negative or nil. Oedipa's night journey in *Lot 49* does not, of course, help her to solve the problem of the Tristero. But the subsequent episode, where she hugs a sailor with DTs, shows that she has now grown as a person. In this respect, Oedipa's night journey is somewhat like the epic descents of Odysseus, Aeneas, and Dante. Indeed, Oedipa is one of the very few in Pynchon's novels who can be described as a "character" rather than as a "figure". Her unique position is in large part due to the urgency of her desire to confront the crucial problem of the Tristero. Oedipa turns the night journey into a test of reality. Perhaps for this reason Pynchon gives this particular night journey a central position in the novel and exempts it from parody.

REFERENCES

[1]Thomas Pynchon, *Vineland* (Boston: Little Brown, 1990), p.380.

[2]Molly Hite, *Ideas of Order in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon* (Columbus : Ohio State University Press,1983),p.88.

[3]Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (Philadelphia : Lippincott,1966),p.109.

[4]Janis P. Stout, *The Journey Narrative in American Literature* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press,1983),p.94.

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MAZE

Shernavaz Buhariwala

The road seemed straight when I set out
And then it turned and turned round
I lost all track of how I came
Or whither I was bound.

My fellow-travellers have all changed
The road it is the same.
Each turn I take returns again
My goals have lost their name.

Entangled and entombed I wait
The darkness gathers round
Mazes have no memory
Absence has no sound.

In the closure of the womb
Life started out of sight.
By reflex and ordination
Birth is always in the light.

All places, planets circular,
Their purposes define.
To make each end a beginning
You must walk a straight line.

When I recall this legacy,
The freedom I will find
From all vain ambiguities
The maze is in the mind.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Translation : Poetics and Practice, **ed. Anisur Rahman; Creative Books, New Delhi, 2002; pp. 201, Rs. 450.**

Translation : Poetics and Practice is the first volume of a series called *Studies in Literature and Ideas* brought out by the Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. Edited by Professor Anisur Ahman, the book comprises fifteen articles that focus on a whole gamut of issues emerging from the academic enterprise of translation in India. Given the multicultural and multilingual realities of the country, and the concomitant emergence of interest in cultural studies, translation has come to occupy a place of prominence in the world of academe today. While translations abound, there is a serious dearth of material that takes up the theoretical constructs that go into the making of a translated text. It is in this sphere that the book makes its mark. The Indian text/context is the particular area that the contributors take up for analysis.

The crisp "Preface" foregrounds the relevance of the theory and practice of translation today. The collection of articles strikes a harmonious balance between the problematics of translational practices and the dynamics of translating actual texts. Many articles concentrate on the poetics of translating specific texts, a few others focus on the complexities of translating a particular form, while the rest are devoted to foregrounding the theoretical paradigms that emanate from the enterprise of translation. The opening piece, "Publish or Perish", by Sujit Mukherjee, sets the ball rolling by asserting that any translated text has to be treated as a literary one, and goes on to give a brief survey of the enterprise of translation in post-colonial India.

Articles by Christi Ann Merrill, M. Sridhar, Alok Bhalla, M. Asaduddin, K. Suneetha Rani and Krishna Barua seek to address text-specific issues. While translating a Rajasthani folktale, Merrill comes to the conclusion that the storyteller, as well as the translator, belong to the category of the creative "folk" despite the divergence of aim and endeavour. M. Sridhar takes up the difficulties of translating less culturally specific texts by drawing upon his experience of translating "Harijan", a poem written by Mudroodoo, an aboriginal Australian writer. Alok Bhalla writes of negotiating with the problematics of taranslating Dharamvir Bharati's *Andha Yug* trying to sustain the sacred and the ethical threads of the text.

Tagore's *Gora* serves as the basis for Tutun Mukherjee's incisive observations on the craftsmanship of translation. While rejecting the European preoccupation with the linguistic utopia of a common language, she views each version of translation as a "differential plurality" that foregrounds the translator's perception. The scope for inter-translatability is expanded further by M. Asaduddin who analyses the comparative strengths and weaknesses of Sajjad Zaheer's Urdu rendition of *Gora*. K. Suneetha Rani's piece sheds critical light on Girish Karnad's English translation of his own Kannada play *Hayavadana*. Seeing translation as interpretation, Rani posits that the translator's ideological standpoint plays a crucial role in the creation of translated texts. Underlining the interplay of assimilation, interpretation and transformation in any translational activity, Krishna Barua explores into the dynamics of translating Bhabendra Nath Saikia's Assamese story "Deuka".

The contributions of N. Kamala, G.J.V. Prasad, Sayantan Dasgupta, Alladi Uma, and Sachidananda Mohanty focus on the theory and practices of translation. The subtleties of translating issues related to women are discussed by N.Kamala and Mohanty. The former writes an insightful article on the lexicon of sexual difference and the effacement of women in translated texts. By providing the evidence for reinforcing this argument, she makes a strong case of evolving new tropes in the place of the stereotyped ones that represent women and their issues in translated texts. Mohanty chooses to foreground the complexities of translating feminist voices by analyzing five Oriya texts of the

late-nineteenth early-twentieth century. His analysis concludes with a call for the necessity of understanding feminist historiography and its socio-cultural matrix in the context of "truths" of cultural/ideological significance. Acknowledging the predominance of literature written in English in the world of Indian academia, Dasgupta sets about formulating the pragmatics of removing this incongruity through the use of the triad methodology of Comparative Literature : genealogy, historiography, and thematology. Alladi Uma underscores the need for the translator to be self-effacing despite intrusion from the choice of the translated version. The dilemma faced by Indian English writers/translators juggling with words that defy translational equivalence forms the crux of Prasad's article. He invites translators to create their own Indian Englishes and traverse, with writers like R.K. Narayan, the roads of representation. Two articles provide exhaustive insights into the translation/transformation of the poetic form. Ray delineates seven different and distinct strategies to be used in translating verse while Rahman examines the possibility/plausibility of writing a *ghazal* in English.

With the burgeoning of translational activities, we stand at the threshold of creating the academic canons that define the paradigms and pragmatics of this field of study. *Translation : Poetics and Practice* makes a significant contribution in this regard. Addressed to the academic reader, the volume seeks to posit and answer many of the difficulties that crop up not only in the course of translation but also in the endeavour to evolve theoretical frameworks that would assist the translator. Considering the fact that no translated version is the final one, the book reiterates the revisionary tendency of this creative/academic activity. It offers myriad perspectives on translational activities in the postcolonial scenario in India.

Ameena K. Ansari

Ashok Kumar Bachchan , *The Theme of Integration in Bhabani Bhattacharya's Novels.* Muzaffarpur, Pushpa Prakashan, 2000, pp.140, Rs.150.

A.K.Bachchan's *The Theme of Integration in Bhabani Bhattacharya's Novels* is an appreciative attempt to study Bhattacharya as a sensitive writer who has concentrated upon the great Indian tradition of integration of diverse and conflicting elements and cultures. Although Bhattacharya is not a prolific writer, he has attracted critical attention from scholars, both at home and abroad.

There are eight chapters in the book. The first chapter begins with an "Introduction" comprising an account of the novelist's life and works, the influences which shaped his vision and the impact of Gandhi and Tagore on him. The idea of integration of values is, by far, the most significant theme that Bhattacharya conveys through his novels. Even in the 'Foreword' Prof. Mohan Jha has rightly pointed out that this theme of integration is not only fundamental to the novels of Bhattacharya but also to the Indian way of life and thought. The second chapter on *So Many Hungers*, throws light on the integration of values of the town as symbolised by the life in Calcutta and those of the village as represented through the life at Baruni, of famine-stricken people on the one hand and the flauntingly successful and corrupt people on the other. The third chapter on *Music For Mohini* comprises a detailed study of old and new values of life in Indian society. The conflict is between Mohini and Jayadev on one hand, and between the grandmother of Mohini and the grandfather of Sudha on the other. They symbolise the conflict between tradition and modernism, between the glory of the past and the demand of the future.

Chapter four : *He Who Rides a Tiger* also presents the blending of the traditional and modern values. It is an attempt to remove class and caste barriers and achieve their synthesis. Chapter five, *Goddess Named Gold,* deals with the theme of economic freedom for the masses to save independent India from being exploited by the greedy capitalists, of integration between the individual and society . Chapter sixth and seventh, *Shadow From Ladakh* and *A Dream in Hawaii* deal mainly with the theme of integration between the Gandhian way of life and steel civilisation , aestheticism and asceticism, the old and the new, the village and city, India and China, between the spiritualism of the east and the materialism of the west, and between science and philosophy.

The concluding chapter sums up neatly the various themes of integration and their artistic merit as visualised in Bhattacharya's novels because, for the novelist, life and art are woven together. The author, at the same time, is slightly critical of Bhattacharya for his range is not very wide as he has not shown much concern in dealing with communal integration except for its marginal reference in *Shadow From Ladakh.* Another limitation of Bhattacharya is his narrow range of characters who are mostly from Bengal except for the ones in A *Goddess Named Gold* and *A Dream in Hawaii*. Because of these limitations, Bhattacharya sometimes smacks of "provincialism."

Thus the book is a balanced and objective study of Bhabani Bhattacharya and should prove quite useful both for the scholars and the common readers.

Sangeeta Yadav.

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Great ideas

come into the world

as gently as doves.

Perhaps then,

if we listen attentively,

we shall hear,

amid the uproar of

empires and nations,

the faint flutter of wings,

the gentle stirring

of life and hope.

ALBERT CAMUS

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