

ENGLISH LITERATURE OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY : A BRIEF LOOK IN TERMS OF CONTINUITY

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Tidy divisions of literary history can lead to misconceptions. To say that the “Jacobean age” began with the accession of James I in 1630 is certainly not to suggest that a dramatic change of mood also took place around that time. Is “Jacobean melancholy” an acceptable concept any more? The idea of “Jacobean mutability” is also on its way to obsolescence.

In fact, the most sensible thing would be to see the late Renaissance in England as one whole movement ... experiencing changes of government, but following (at the same time) its own internal logic. The closing down of the theatres in 1642 dealt a major blow to literature in some minor ways. But the literary modes and genres through the 17th century developed ... or declined ... following their own laws rather than the fluctuations in the political field.

While Walter Raleigh (c. 1552) ignored the Renaissance reassertion of the dignity of man, George Chapman’s (c. 1559) view appeared (much) more forward-looking betraying the newer attitudes extolling human value. At Chapman’s hands Ulysses is turned into a type of Renaissance hero, overcoming temptation and yielding examples of prudence and fortitude. But Francis Bacon was easily the most influential writer of the whole century. He was committed to upholding the Renaissance concept of *vita activa*...the life dedicated to serving society. He mixed ‘profit’ with ‘delight’, analysed cause and effect in social and psychological terms, and set out to defend the pursuit of knowledge snapping his finger at such stigma as ‘forbidden knowledge’, which scientific research during the Renaissance had the misfortune of labouring under. Bacon, prompted by his concern for providing both profit and delight, wrote with obvious affection of the combined attractions of the masque: “Dancing to song is a thing of great state and pleasure.” The masque became very popular in the years between 1605 and 1640. The masque can be seen as conspicuous consumption, a sign of decadence, or, as the apotheosis of the arts. Its disappearance coincided with the growth of public crises in the 1640s.

In verse, *formal satire* found a sudden maturity (in the works of Joseph Hall, John Donne and John Marston). *Epigram* ... a specific verse form connected with satire ... flourished. In drama, *tragi-comedy* and *pastoral play* were imported from Italy.

The prose arena saw the growth of a whole series of genres: the Essay and its related genre paradox (or, mock-encomium) being the foremost. The new genres did not come out of the blue, but were imported from continental Europe.

[Montaigne served as the continental model for *Essay*, Ortesio Lando as the model of *Paradox*, Cassaubon's Latin translation of Theophrastus for *Character*]. This certainly was possible because of the Englishman's classical education ... thanks to the Renaissance. All the writers between 1610 and 1630 were university-educated and keen students of Latin and Greek classics.

John Donne, in his love poetry, breaks with the tradition of the 16th century love poetry where the mistress is remote and unattainable, but the lover (the poet) finds continuing inspiration from his frustration. "Where other poets place their mistress on a pedestal, he (Donne) puts her in bed, next to him" ... says Brian Vickers. By describing consummation of love Donne regenerated love poetry. In a sense, at his hands all the promises and potentials of man-woman love of the Renaissance found fulfillment and realisation. Ben Jonson maintained a constant attitude to life, language, and poetry in all his poems. He shared the fundamental belief of Renaissance humanists that the 'good poet' must first be a 'good man', an educator and guardian of morality.

Herbert, Vaughan, Herrick, Carew, Suckling, Cowley ... all these poets carried on the legacy of Donne and Ben Jonson in one way or the other. In Cowley's *Davideis, A Sacred Poem of the Troubles of David* (1656), a worthy biblical pastiche and in *Gondibert* (1650) by Sir William Davenant (1605-68) we see how a genre like the Renaissance epic can persist beyond its time and be practised without conviction or need. Milton showed that the Renaissance epic was not wholly dead, after all. Samuel Butler brought new life to epic through parody and the mock-heroic. His *Hudibras* (1663) is a prophetic example. Swift and Gay would be the heirs of Butler, while Denham and Waller served as models for Dryden and Pope. Death of one literary mode led to the birth of another, as it were. In a very special sense this is a very productive continuity, indicating the innate, inevitable vitality of the process of literary growth. However, religious poetry of the kind written by Crashaw (1613-49) and Thomas Traherne (1637-74) left no impact on the succeeding generation of poets. The sense of a loss of coherence is too apparent in the mid 17th century religious poetry.

A word about Milton (1608-74), whose 'epic' contribution I mentioned a little earlier. Milton carried on the Renaissance ethos. The final sentence of *Areopagitica* reads: "Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties." In his representative poems he stood by the Renaissance opposition between virtue and pleasure. *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* (1630) illustrate this principle, and it is one of the right clues to the right interpretation of *Comus* (1634). In one episode in his monody in the form of pastoral lament, *Lycidas* (1637), he poses a question: 'Why should one strictly meditate the thankless muse instead of indulging in amorous pleasure?' His answer is:

(the orthodox Renaissance humanist belief that)

"Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise.../

To scorn delights, and live laborious days. . ."

Milton makes *Paradise Lost* into an epic without a hero. Like all Renaissance writers, Milton wants his readers to recognise evil in his epic and detest it, but he does not fail to add his own moral judgements to reinforce the readers. Two other long poems of his treat temptation and fortitude as themes: these two are *Samson Agonistes* (1647 – 53?) and *Paradise Regained* (1667-70). In both the poems the heroes triumph, and belong to the exemplary pattern of normal Renaissance epic (even though *Samson Agonistes* is in the form of classical tragedy).

Andrew Marvell (1621-78) would lend himself wonderfully well to our basic premise of continuity and regeneration of literature in its major forms through the 17th century. He is a Renaissance poet ... heir to a tradition going back to Virgil and Horace, Cicero and Plato, a tradition of involvement with the state in ethical and political terms. He believes (like Milton does, or Sidney or Spenser) that the poet has a responsible role in society. He follows Donne, too, ... he blends lyricism with wit and paradox. But while inheriting and revitalizing a tradition he also heralds a new age. *The Rehearsal Transposed* (1672-3) ... his prose satire...anticipates Swift. He also absorbs Dryden's new style (in the satiric couplets of his *The Last Instruction to a Painter* [1667] 17th century English literature ... overall ... is remarkable for its ability to find fresh forms for new experiences. Marvell sums up this ability.

I have, so far, spoken more or less in favour of continuity, or, in a sense, development of literary forms through the 17th century. After writing the above paragraphs in support of my contention I happened to read Robert D. Hume's *The Development of English Drama in the Late 17th Century*. In Chapter I of the book, "What is 'Restoration' drama?" he writes :

"Students raised on the literary history implicit in survey courses come unthinkingly to believe in tidy, necessary, forward movement. Etherege exists to mould Congreve's form; Defoe helps establish the realism and individuality in the novel which will make Richardson possible ... The Carolean drama is ... seen largely as a prelude leading toward triumph (*The Way of the World*) and collapse (the onset of sentimental drama)..."

He also says: "The usual notions of 'development' are simplistic nonsense." But, interestingly, later, in the same chapter, he would say: "My procedure in tracing 'development' will be to look for trends in a large number of plays over fairly short spans of time. Only very rough classifications need be made." Still later, "What I trace will not show 'development' in any neat, tidy, and sophisticated sense..."

In fact, Hume seems to be more concerned with the 'how' rather than the 'why' of development ... 'how the drama changed rather than why'. But the 'how' carries the seed of 'why', doesn't it? I do not see any harm at all in going for an exercise that would take us into both the 'how' and the 'why' of changes and development over a period of time, not necessarily short.

The Restoration period ... the second half of the 17th century ... is seen as a kind of preface to the 18th century literary history. This second half (of the 17th

century) is dominated by drama. There is a difference of opinion regarding the years which the term "restoration" is meant to include. Most commonly, it is 1660-1700; but extension is often made to 1707 and even to 1737. The 1660-1700 concept, of course, has the virtue of tidiness. Jeremy Collier's blast in 1698 paves the way for Congreve's failure in 1700 and the appearance of Steele's first play in 1701. This sequence constitutes a very tidy shift from Restoration to Sentimental Comedy. But most early 18th century drama can quite properly be viewed as outgrowth of late 17th century developments. The Licensing Act of 1737 again indicates governmental interference (after the reopening of the theatres in 1660) and is the appropriate termination point.

The sensible way to look at Restoration Drama is not to take it as an offshoot of French theatre ... or at least heavily influenced by it. It is part of a continuing tradition ... as suggested by Bonamy Dobree (in *Restoration Comedy*) and Allardyce Nicoll (in *History of English Drama 1660-1900*) many years ago. We have now come to conclude that the native tradition in England has been so strong that anything incorporated into the English way of life is immediately adapted and anglicized to the point that whatever its origins it becomes essentially English. Thus the French influence on Restoration Drama is minimal.

It is also logical to think that there was a definite link between English dramatic writing before and after the Commonwealth period. The anarchy projected by the world described by Hobbes in his *Leviathan* (1651) was a replacement of the ideally stable and morally coherent model of the previous era, as exemplified in Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Policy* (1593). This anarchy is common to dramas written before and after the commonwealth.

The Cavaliers' hope in a series of absolute values such as love, honour and obedience to order is seriously questioned by the later generation after a period of twenty years of exile. A superficial study of the period of the immediate restoration of monarchy reveals an open license and libertinage. It is quite tempting to interpret (misinterpret?) the brazenness and unconcealed eroticism of the period in terms of a moral and social revolution. But the frantic nature of the overall atmosphere ... the excess of excitement ... has a sure suggestion of unreality. Underneath this picture of sensational debauchery we find an age of curiosity (or which certainly Dryden's curiosity is also symptomatic) led to the founding of the Royal Society (1662). Curiously, the sexual attitudes get conditioned... at this time ... by the curiosity and scientific reason. The 'new' men and women (of this time) go for an almost scientific experimentation by discovering and confirming ... through their perceptions and actions ... that sexual desire and love were two separate things.

After the collapse of the platonic code with Cromwell's exit, the new code, discovered during the reign of Charles II and James II, paves the way, in both the tragedy and the comedy of these years, for a serious search for identity. In much of the bawdy element there is, in fact, a striving towards honesty and a serious attempt to discover anything, which might be. While the pre-restoration comedy had attempted to expose the hidden recesses of human passion and desire, the comedy of

Etherege and Wycherley does not need to expose anything hidden and can simply show the same passions and desires as they appeared in daily life.

The difference between the Jacobean comedy and the Restoration comedy should not be discussed in terms of the degree of profundity but the degree of uncertainty. The latter is far more uncertain than the former. Similarly, the Restoration tragedy is in search of its heroes in unreality because of lack of any lasting heroism in its own age. Essentially, the subject matter of English plays before 1642 is identical with the subject matter of English drama in the 1680s and 1690s. Marston, Massinger and Shirley reveal what we can superficially (and anachronistically) call the Restoration flavour.

J.C. Thompson (in the book *Fifty British Plays*) in his essay "Audience and Taste" emphatically establishes that the ingredients of Restoration comedy exist in Jacobean drama and the later period continues and develops from the earlier.

So we will go by our 'development and continuity' theory rather than the theory of French imposition vis-à-vis Restoration drama.

Finally, looking at the so-called degeneration of the brilliance and sparkle of the Restoration comedy into the sentimental variety, one could relate the development to the emergence of a clearer sense of morality in the social outlook, rather than uninteresting and unappealing 'coldness'. The drama becomes fundamentally more sober and affectionate and speaks of the deep sincerity of the new exponents of drama, who looked forward to an enlightened future with a careful, sober hope.

This responsibility to the future should be considered (as) a vital clue to the understanding of the drama from Steele onwards.

The Problematics of Gender Identity in the Early Poetry of T.S.Eliot

Indranil Acharya

All the poets pivotal in evolving the sonorous erotic lyricism of the nineteenth century against which the modernists sharply reacted - Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, the pre - Raphaelites- were held responsible for feminizing poetry, often in those poems about women that define the features of poetic vision and style. In this way the portrait of a lady in nineteenth century poetry implies a debate about the gender of the poetical¹. In a similar fashion, the modern portrait of a lady concerns the

relationship of gender to poetic speech and figure. I propose to concentrate on T. S. Eliot, for his treatment of the feminine subject reveals much about the evolution of his poetic

identity. Eliot's early poetry is a veritable gallery of female personae. In many ways, their

predominance is quite natural and expected. The poetic tradition with which he matured, the strain of Romanticism that evolves through Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites, is built upon the lyric evocation of female subjects, and even a cursory glance at Eliot' s early uncollected work demonstrates mighty echoes of those voices. These lines from The Portrait, for example, remind us of Rossetti's numerous sonnets on female portraiture:

Not like a tranquil goddess carved of stone
But evanescent, as if one should meet.
A pensive lamia in some wood - retreat,
An immaterial fancy of one's own .
No meditations glad or ominous
Disturb her lips, or *move* the slender hands;
Her dark eyes keep their secrets hid from us,
Beyond the circle of our thoughts she stands.(Poems Written in Early Youth 27)

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar have shown echoes of A. C. Swinburne's Lesbia Brandon in The Love Song of Saint Sebastian (Gilbert and Gubar 30-31), and Circe Palace also echoes Swinburne. They argue that the former poem appears to be completely under the sado - masochistic influence of Swinburne in its projection of the conflict between the sexes, and it is rather astonishing for them because Eliot was a classical, royalist, Anglican Nobel prize winner- producing such orthodox texts as Ash Wednesday and Murder in the Cathedral.The poem, according to them, simply dramatizes the most "brutal" implications of sexual animosities that are also firmly etched in other texts by Eliot. Promising lethal loyalty to his mistress, the self - flagellating speaker of St. Sebastian clearly implicates desire with annihilation, sex with violence, for he pledges first to whip himself in order to show his erotic passion and then to asphyxiate and disfigure his sweetheart so that she will no longer be beautiful to anyone but him. In this respect the speaker of Eliot's poem resembles one enamoured persona from Swinburne' s Lesbia Brandon (written

ca. 1864 - 70; published 1952). I quote a passage from that novel to demonstrate the similarity in their psychological states:

Deeply he desired to die by her, if that could be; and more deeply, if this could be, to destroy her; scourge her with swooning and absorb the blood with kisses; caress and lacerate her loveliness, alleviate and heighten her pains; to feel her foot upon his throat, and wound her OWN with his teeth; submit his body and soul for a little to her lightest will, and satiate upon hers the desperate caprice of his immeasurable desire; to inflict careful fortune on limbs too tender to embrace, suck the tears off her laden eyelids, bite through her sweet and shuddering lips. (225)

Now, *notwithstanding the Swinburnean overtones*, St. Sebastian reveals a consciousness of sex battle that pervades much of Eliot's work because many other texts written in the same period clearly relate such conflict to the demands of the New Woman. *Petit Epite*, a Laforguian verse in French from the same manuscript in which St. Sebastian appears, mockingly adopts a standpoint against vote for women. Cousin Nancy (1917) openly ridicules the hollow modernity of the emancipated Miss Nancy Ellicott, who not only "smoked / And danced all the modern dances" but also, as if to demolish the earth itself, "Strode across the hills and broke them." (Collected Poems 1909-1962, 32) Even the poem's allusive ending covertly criticizes this aggressive protoflapper:

Upon the glazen shelves kept watch
Matthew and Waldo, guardians of the faith,
The army of unalterable law. (32)

In the opinion of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar Eliot's presentation of Matthew (Arnold) and Waldo (Emerson) as fragile 'guardians of faith' is undoubtedly ironic. But, at the same time, their identification with the 'army of unalterable law' indicates Eliot's condemnation of rebellious Nancy whose breaking of nature (the hills) also threatens to break the grounds of culture (Gilbert and Gubar 32). The innate distrust that Eliot nurtures against the New Woman becomes quite obvious once again.

Thus, when Eliot composes Portrait of a Lady or The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock he is recasting a nineteenth - century mode of portraiture one finds in his early poetry.

Apart from the impact of this "feminized" poetic tradition, Eliot was influenced by what

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar describe as a gradually feminized literary culture, in which women writers, editors and patrons played pivotal roles (125-162). The formation of the poet's identity was significantly inspired by these two factors. He celebrated Christina Rossetti, Marianne Moore, and Djuna Barnes. But although compliments formulated by this literary man were true, they were sometimes

problematic. And this is quite in keeping with the problematic identity of the poet. He never wants to pigeonhole his assertions. It gives rise to ambiguity and complexity. Eliot enjoyed this camouflage. For instance, his "final, and magnificent compliment" to Marianne Moore's poetry is that it "is as 'feminine' as Christina Rossetti's." (qtd. in Bonnie Costello 28)

Finally, the mightiest impact on Eliot's manifestation of his identity as a poet was probably that of his mother, who was a poet herself and, who told her son that she hoped he would succeed in the literary pursuit at which she had not been able to achieve any moderate success. (The Letters of T.S.Eliot 13) Thus, in respect of literary tradition, literary culture, and personal biography, Eliot would define his identity in the context of a mighty female presence.

Eliot's early poetry is predominantly engaged with the hassles of defining a voice in the context of this powerful female presence. Portrait of a Lady represents the case most overtly. The poem is a battlefield of voices, a juxtaposition launched to determine who - or whose music - should "have the advantage, after all". Eliot orders the poem's three parts by pairing the voices of the Lady and the speaker. The speaker first describes the Lady's arrangements - the way she decorates her chamber, the accents of her voice - and then quests for a voice and figuration of his own to separate himself from her. The female presence here goads him to assert his independent identity in order to overcome his anxiety of being overshadowed by her. The major metaphor in this dual of voices is music. The Lady speaks through "attenuated tones of violins / Mingled with remote cornets", violins the speaker hears as shattered and jarring as he desperately tries to construct a prelude of his own, "capricious monotone".

The idiom in which the Lady introduces herself is a maudlin one that relies upon the stock figuration of a poetic sensibility - lilacs and hyacinths, gray and smoky afternoons, evenings that are yellow and rose. She recreates the plot of an Arnoldian romance - friendship that offers a person secure value in a hostile world (as the speaker of Dover Beach says, "Ah love, let us be true to one another"); a buried life, hands that extend across a gulf, missed proximities. Apart from this harmony in imagery and theme with a conventional nineteenth century idiom, the part of this poem that the Lady puts in a sequence have the unity of atmosphere, setting, and dramatic situation that mark the Victorian lyric. The Lady wants to shape a poem in the tradition of Two in the Campagna, To Marguerite - Continued, or Amours de Voyage.

However, the conflict deepens when the speaker introjects "false notes" into the Lady's sentimental lyric. It is definitely a desperate attempt on his part to assert the "tom -tom" of his own poetic identity. He strives for a metropolitan, masculine vocabulary - tobacco, books, the comics and the sporting page, the late events, the public clocks. He exploits the irony and the incongruous juxtaposition that characterize him as a modern man:

Particularly I remark
An English countess goes upon the stage.
A Greek was murdered at a Polish dance,
Another bank defaulter has confessed. (Collected Poems 20)

Such an employment of irony and disjunction, for all its covert recognition of some of the psychological factors of the poem, sustains the speaker's sense of poetic hegemony:

I keep my countenance,
I remain self-possessed... (20)

But this is a domination, as Hugh Kenner says of Laforgue, whose virtuosity is "the debonair panic of a man whose strategy. . . is to hasten across abysses he has no taste for exploring." (qtd. in Kenner 21)

This Laforguian strategy helped Eliot not to be committed to any serious and self-sufficient magniloquence like the late Elizabethan dramatists. Rather, it offered him an excellent opportunity for indulging in parody. He also allows the speaker to be dominated and circumscribed by his own image of himself, "since no one goes back alive out of this gulf, without fear I expose my heart to you".²

Furthermore, this narcissistic portrayal of the speaker is often a defence mechanism against the stupendous impact of the Lady. The assertion of identity is of paramount concern for the speaker as if it implies any adoption of devious or perverse means. In this way, the speaker exhibits a mounting anxiety in his quest for poetic figures to hold his own identity, as he borrows "every changing shape to find expression." (CP 22) The speaker finally strives to bring down his anxiety by imagining the death of the lady, both in its epigraph and in the atmosphere of Juliet's tomb created in its introductory lines. The poem thus arrives at the conclusion of its duel of voices, a duel it concedes to the Lady. By her demise she attains a certain edge of realized expression - "This music is successful with a 'dying fall' " - that the speaker is far from attaining ever. Even at the end he is "Doubtful, for a while/Not knowing what to feel or if I understand /Or whether wise or foolish, tardy or too soon . . ." (CP 22) However, the speaker has achieved some kind of triumph in the long run. By imagining her death, he formulates her within the limits of the portrait he has created and thus cuts down to manageable limits the discomfort she causes him. She thus becomes a part of the portrait gallery of buried literary ladies of the nineteenth century - Edgar Allan Poe's *Oval Portrait*, Tennyson's *Gardener's Daughter*, Browning's *My Last Duchess*. (Carol Christ 26) These nineteenth century portraits often equate the death of their subject with the appropriation of a literary type identified as feminine. In the case of Eliot's poem, the device of the portrait not only offers a chance to the speaker to aestheticize and therefore distance an uneasy relationship, it also enables Eliot to identify a fantasy of desertion and murder with issues of literary style. He, thus, devises a drama whereby he detaches himself from a feminized poetic idiom. At the same time, he appropriates its effects through the ventriloquized voice of the Lady. Eliot

imagines the literary past as a woman, whom he deserts, dishonours, even assassinates while he appropriates her voice. Indeed, Eliot's poetry provides occasion for questioning Harold Bloom's paradigm of poetic influence, because, at least in his poetry, Eliot is prone to project safely faraway voices of the literary tradition, with whom he wishes unabashedly to identify himself, as male, whereas he associates poetic props of the nineteenth century, far closer to his poetic idiom, with a woman whom the poem in some fashion engages in a drama of desertion and appropriation. He thus prefers to imagine his relationship to the immediate literary past not as an Oedipal struggle but as a desertion or a rape. Eliot's gendering of this drama of betrayal - a gendering already implied in the feminization of the poetic idiom in the nineteenth century - gives him an opportunity to enact and mask issues of poetic influence simultaneously.³ It also captures the process through which Eliot is gradually evolving his poetic credentials, his independent identity.

Even when the woman is more ideally constructed than the woman in Portrait of a Lady Eliot connects her portrayal with identical issues of desertion and literary style. Another portrait poem in the Prufrock volume, for instance, La Figlia che Piange, also connects its female subject with a nineteenth - century style, in this example, Victorian sentimental narrative painting, which covertly suggests a domestic drama in the attitudinizing of its subject. Just like Portrait of a Lady, the poem acts out a fantasy of desertion, whose reward, as it were, is an image that becomes the funerary monument to which the poem's title refers. By constructing his portrait of a lady, the lover/ poet at once appropriates "a gesture and a pose" while he ensures his distancing from a woman whose real presence threatens to overshadow him. (Ronald Bush 11-14) Confronted with the image of the girl in his daydream, the dandified speaker responds with a Prufrock – like doubleness. Threatened by his desires he recoils into the irony of a self - consciously oblique phrase: "Fling them to the ground and turn /With a fugitive resentment in your eyes . . ." (CP 36) But the needs of his emotional life cannot be suppressed for long. In the midst of his ironic detachment, we feel the might of an obsession. It becomes apparent in the use of four emphatic monosyllables:

Stand on the highest pavement. . ./ Lean on a garden urn. . ./
Clasp your flowers to you. . .
Fling them to the ground . . . (CP 36)

The force behind these imperatives suggests how much psychic energy Eliot's speaker must spend to resist the girl's image from becoming vivid and uncomfortable. However, despite his best efforts, his attempts prove futile. *In* the last line of the first stanza an insurgent explosion of lyricism disencumbers the girl's image, and all but erases the dandy's emotional detachment: "Weave, *weave* the sunlight in your hair . . ." After a few lines *we* find the dandy by comparing the lover's desertion of his beloved to the mind's desertion of an exploited body. It suggests that at some level, man and girl, lover and beloved, are projections of his own psyche, and that "la figlia", the young girl, is an image of his own emotional life. It is not surprising that the similes are sympathetically weighed toward the body. Ronald Bush argues that though one part of the speaker's psyche

displays a New England sensibility, the dandy's strongest identification is with the buried emotional life suggested by the heart, the body and the girl. He has been delinked from his vital centre by an acquired self, and the split seems like the separation of death. Like Prufrock, he is suspended between two identities, unable to enjoy either. In this way, in their encounters with gender issue the speakers of Eliot's early poems display ghostly identities. According to Bush, Eliot, of course, unlike the dandy he constructed, could name his demons by writing poetry. But at this stage of his career he was no more able to dispel a constant feeling of emotional alienation than was his surrogate. Poetry integrated his life only for a moment.

In this way, Eliot's speaker - both in this poem and Portrait of a Lady - has a discomfiting resemblance to that nineteenth century commissioner of portraits, Browning's Duke. He alters himself from one who is the object of a discomfiting female look to one who completely controls the gaze, who "puts by the curtain". By carefully constructing an image, he saves himself from decomposure.

The prose poem Hysteria makes explicit the relation between the construction of a physically unspoiled image and the mental poise of the male subject. The poem narrates a fantasy of being swallowed up in "the dark caverns" of a woman's throat, a fantasy that the title locates as hysteria. The speaker's hysteria begins to mount when he becomes appropriated by the woman's voice: "As she laughed I was aware of becoming involved in her laughter and being part of it. . ." He loses a sense of the visual integrity of her image, representing body parts by grotesquely anthropomorphized metaphors: "[H]er teeth were only accidental stars with a talent for squad - drill". (CP 34) He diverts himself from this fantasy of drowning / engulfment only by concentrating on a visually separate male image, the aged waiter, who "with trembling hands was hurriedly spreading a pink and white checked cloth over the rusty green iron table". (CP 34) These trembling hands - for Eliot often the last determining object of human identity in moments of dehumanization and fragmentation - perform the one act in the poem described with distinct boundaries and visual precision: the spreading of a pink and white checked cloth on a rusty green iron table. The ordering of the two adjectival phrases - "pink and white checked", "rusty green iron" - suggests that they function to arrest/ restrict attention in visually discrete images that conceal the speaker's hysteria, much as they cover the table. The speaker then decides that if he can offer clearer outlines to the female image by transfixing the shaking of the woman's breasts, he can gather the fragments of the afternoon, and he focuses his attention "with careful subtlety to this end".

In this way Hysteria suggests the function of the stilled *and* limited / pigeonholed images of Portrait and Figlia. They save the speaker from being swallowed up by the woman - an engulfment that Eliot links with absorption in her voice or her music - and grant him a sense of security in withholding his own voice. But this security is enjoyed at a certain cost. Eliot associates the meticulously constructed whole woman of his poetry with a stifflingly genteel feminine society. The poems in which they are cast also possess the closest affinity in Eliot's work to a nineteenth century poetic idiom and structure, one he identifies as

feminine. Eliot manipulates his images of women by residing within these poetic and social boundaries, but he delineates those confines as not granting him an authentic identity. The strategy of possession and vilification is quite in keeping with the Bloomian paradigm of poetic influence.

In an essay on Pound's attitudes toward the visual arts in the Cantos, Michael Bernstein argues that Pound associated female sexuality with unrestricted art, ungraspable imaginative dispersal that was antithetical to his rigid and bounded line. (Bernstein 347-364) Pound's own portrait of a lady, Portrait d'une Femme, fully justifies Bernstein's thesis for the Sargasso Sea of the lady's mind, her sea - hoard of deciduous things, represents an identity without a centre, a collage of detail without a defining principal, a sensibility without confines, *which* is a negative image of Pound's poetic ideal. For Eliot, too, the confined nature of the female image is crucial to the evolution of his poetic idiom, but he handles the issue in a manner radically different from that of Pound. Eliot associates the bounded line with a feminized poetic idiom from which he desires to distance himself, whereas he identifies his strongest and most characteristic poetic voice through the imaginative dispersal of the female body.

In Women in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot Tony Pinkney argues that Sweeney's lines, "Any man has to, needs to, wants to / once in a lifetime, do a girl in", define the pivotal impetus of Eliot's poetry. (18) According to Pinkney, Sweeney's claim may be turned back upon the poetry itself, for it will come to pass that any Eliotic text has to, needs to, wants to, in one way or another, do a girl in. If it fails to achieve that goal, it is itself murderously threatened by the girl. In this context, Hysteria is an emblematic text in Eliot oeuvre. Pinkney says that there is a possibility of our concurring with the view of A. D. Moody who opines that the speaker is reduced to a state of nerves by her sexuality, or rather by his own fantasy to a voracious and cannibalistic vagina. Yet Pinkney argues, the speaker's fears of fragmentation and loss of independent identity belong more to the fundamental disorders of psychosis than they do to such comparatively manageable neuroses as hysteria.

However, Carol Christ (29) offers a different interpretation. She considers Pinkney's insight to be only partially true. In her opinion, among the most salient characteristics of Eliot's poetry is the way in which it fragments not just female bodies but all bodies, and often in a manner that makes their gender ambiguous and problematic. She is rather inclined to suggest that the issue of corporeal intactness rather than aggression toward women dominates Eliot's poetry. The two issues are, of course, interrelated. If one were seeking to articulate a motivating psychology for Eliot's poetry, one might argue that problem in distancing himself from woman leads to various efforts to do her in. But, Carol Christ thinks, such a misogynistic interpretation would be at the expense of simplifying both the violence of his poetry and the ambiguity in its representation of gender. The murderous impulse toward the woman in Eliot is ever associated with a concern with the intactness of the body, and violent fantasies of physical dismemberment shift quite fluidly between the sexes, as in The Love Song of Saint Sebastian, where Eliot follows a fantasy of flogging himself to

death with one of dismembering the woman to whom the poem is addressed. Eliot's preoccupation with physical intactness is in turn intimately linked with his of poetic voice and identity. When Eliot creates an intact image of a woman's body, as he does in the portrait poems, he represents the male as having difficulty finding his own voice, as we can see in the changing figures of Portrait of a Lady or the divided persona of La Figlia che Piange. He tends to construct such poems as an ironic dialogue with a nineteenth - century idiom that he simultaneously subverts and appropriates. In the process, however, he is unable to define his own voice with any certainty. In contrast, he identifies his strongest voice not only by dismembering the body but by making ambiguous its identification with both character and gender.⁴ He places at the centre of such poems a moment of vision that is postponed, evaded, or concealed but whose corporeal expressions are displaced, ungendered, onto other elements of the poem. For Eliot, poetic representation of a mighty female presence created hassles in embodying the male. In order to do so, Eliot bypasses envisioning the female, indeed, avoids attaching gender to bodies. In this way we see some kind of a transcendence of gendering for protecting the male identity.

This pattern can be clearly traced in The Love Song J. Alfred Prufrock. The poem centres on not only an unarticulated question, as all readers concur, but also an unenvisioned centre, the "one" whom Prufrock addresses. The poem never visualized the woman with whom Prufrock fancies an encounter except in fragments and in plurals - eyes, arms, skirts - synecdoches we might well imagine as fetishistic substitutions. But even these synecdochic substitutions are not clearly engendered. The braceleted arms and the skirts are typically feminine, but the faces, hands, the voices, the eyes are not. As if to displace the major human object it does not visualize, the poem projects images of the body onto the landscape (the sky, the streets, the fog), but these images, for all their overt intimation of sexuality, also evade the designation of gender (the muttering retreats of restless nights, the fog that rubs, licks, and lingers) . The most visually exact images in the poem are those of Prufrock himself, a Prufrock meticulously constructed - 'My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin, / My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin.' (CP 14) - only to be disintegrated by the roving eyes of another into gaunt arms and legs, a balding head brought in upon a platter. Besides, the images related to Prufrock are themselves, as Tony Pinkney observes, awfully unstable, attributes constructing the identity of the subject at one instant only to be wielded by the objective the next, like the pin that centres his necktie and then pins him to the wall or the arms that metamorphose into Prufrock's Kafkaesque claws. (Pinkney 44) According to Pinkney, each image can be turned inside out to show its opposite. John the Baptist may have been the luckless victim of the castrating Salome, but Lazarus was only resurrected as a consequence of Mary and Martha's imploring of Christ. There will be time, Prufrock cries, to 'murder and create', but in this poetic text aggression and idealization prove to be tantalizingly interchangeable. In the closing lines we see the mermaids wreathing Prufrock as consolingly as the fog curled about the house. It is an idealized fantasy which postpones, however dangerously, the moment of 'human' waking and drowning. Yet such wreathing is rather akin to the more intimidating engulfings or 'involvements' of Hysteria. The mystery of Prufrock leaves us reflecting, eloquent by its very silence, on the terrifying revelation that the mermaids

traditionally drown their lovers. Danger does not encroach from the external world; but is in fact lurking within this fantasy Eden from the very beginning.

The poem, in these numerous ways, disintegrates the body, making ambiguous its sexual identification. These scattered body parts at once imply and evade a major encounter the speaker cannot present himself to confront, but in the pattern of their dispersal they constitute the voice that Prufrock feels cannot exist in the intent look of the other.

For all of its magnificence as a poetic resolution of the problems in constructing a gendered identity that mark Eliot's poetry, The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock concludes with a candid confession of the relational failure that is its cost.

Notes

- 1 This idea has been derived from Carol Christ's illuminating essay, "The Feminine Subject in Victorian Poetry" in *ELH*, 54 (1987), pp. 385 - 401.
- 2 These words are spoken by Count Guido da Montefeltro (1223 - 98) in Dante's Inferno, xxvii, pp. 61 - 6. Cited in B. C. Southam's A Student's Guide to the Selected Poems of T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1994, Sixth edn.) p. 47.
- 3 In this context I feel inclined to refer to the critical text NoMan's Land in which Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar explain Eliot's construction of influence differently in arguing that Eliot's yearning for a golden age before the dissociation of sensibility set in WAS an attempt to wipe out the history linked with the advent of women into the literary marketplace (p. 154).
- 4 In her article titled, "Diana Described: Scattered Women and Scattered Rhyme", in Writing and Sexual Difference, ed. Elizabeth Abel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 95 - 110, Nancy J. Vickers contends that Petrarch tones down the threat that the sight of the female carries to his own physical integrity by transforming her visible entirety to scattered words through which he composes his Rime Sparse. Vickers's paradigm is a provocative one for Eliot, although his songs cannot be labeled as songs of praise/ eulogy, and Eliot does not

merely disperse the female body but decomposes all bodies.

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Keki Nasserwanji Daruwalla as a Poet: A Study of His Poetry

Bijay Kant Dubey

Keki N. Daruwalla, who was born on the 24th of January, 1937 at Lahore, in the then time British India, is without any doubt one of those writers of Indian English poetry who have really worked for the growth, development and furtherance of modern creative poetry right from the seventies and since then have been contributing to it to enrich with the poems of a new standing and tenor tendered to us from time to time. Now the time has come to make a full-length assessment of his poetry. One among the Parsi quartet, taking Adil Jussawalla, K.D. Katrak and Gieve Patel altogether, he has been plodding his way to leave an imprint of his own individuality and calibre. Sardonic and sarcastic, he is a poet of some hard heart, as because sentimentality has nothing to do with. He sees it all with his hawkish imagery and landscape of delving. Really, a tough talking lies therein. Violence, pestilence, epidemic, drought, famine, bloodshed, riot, murder, suicide, enmity, vengeance, wrath, anger, animality and curfew are the specific words of the poet. As a writer of verse, he is but a tragedian and poems to him as dramatic monologues or the bits of tragedies. Tears are not there into the eyes of the poet and these cannot wet him. A few have really understood his worth and relevance, so substantial, so robust and healthy and his scribbling is not for a timid heart at all, as because his is a heart of a hunter; that of a falconer. Nature red in tooth and claw is the spirit and he seeks to view life in that perspective, as by training and profession he is an IPS officer, writing poems in English. Apart from his early education done here and there, he finally did his M.A. in English from Govt. College, Ludhiana. In 1958, he qualified for the IPS and joined it and the resultant posting and placement thereafter took him to different places, as such Dehradun, Meerut, Agra, Barabanki, Farrukhabad, Luknow, Joshimath, Ranikhet and others in the U.P. Daruwalla was a Visiting Fellow at Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford during 1980-82. Under Orion is the first book of poems with which he starts the poetic journey of his life and it was none but P.Lal who himself brought it out from his Writers Workshop. At that time there had been a few takers of his poetry. But the first work too showed the promise it had to demonstrate. Apparition in April, 1971, Crossing of Rivers, 1976, Winter Poems, 1980, The Keeper of the Dead, 1982, Landscapes, 1987, A Summer of Tigers, 1995, Night River, 2000, The Map-maker, 2002, The Scarecrow and the Ghost, 2004, etc. are the collections of poems. He received the Sahitya Akademi Award for his book named The Keeper of the Dead in 1984. Collected Poems (1970-2005) has appeared from Penguin, India in 2006; Two Decades of Indian Poetry (1960-1980), published in 1980, is his edited volume. Today he is not only a poet, but has turned into a short story writer as well as a novelist.

A modern poet, he has his own terminology and diction to state forth, to give poetic statements, as it is a case with most of the writers of today, so much individualized and personalized in their says and depiction of life. Most of the poems which they have to us from the poetic pen of Daruwalla appear to be hard and tough

from the exterior level, but are not so, as because there is a softer interior to be seen across and admired for and this is his specific quality, which he has been perfecting for so long, and that too since the start. Daruwalla as a poet is not at all concerned with the innocence and ignorance with which we see it all, but with all brave-manly heart and spirit. The modern English poets are the poetic specimens of the poet under our scrutiny and perusal as he has been delving into the domains of Indian English poesy in his own way. Though there is something very strongly Indian in him, but instead of it, his is a Parsi heart and soul and his ethos, lineage, legacy, history, myth and mysticism cannot of ours which we hold them so blindly, so strongly, as because he has also something of his own to say and to share with. Everything of ours cannot be the way of evaluation for all. A Parsi poet, if to go deep into his thematic content and life-philosophy, the bits of Zoroaster, what did he say and what it were his teachings, we shall come to mark them naturally. The references to the tower of silence, on which the Parsis place their dead for the scavenger birds to do away with and to the fire hymns find mentioned in the works of the poet apart from the things of his place of growing up and living down. The decades of human time can be penetrated in terms of home-seeking, shelter, displacement, ethnicity and humanism. There is nothing to question him with regard to the theme of Indianness, the process of Indianization that it takes within its course of naturalization and the Indianism he propagates for in the usage and selection of words and terms, as because he is deeply rooted into the soil of India, apart from his legacy, heritage, history, lineage, thought and tradition he belongs to and there is nothing as that to intercept him on the midway in connection with that. His understanding of India; Indian thought, culture and philosophy can be found in his love for Charvaka and Karna as Adil Jussawalla has for Eklavya. To read Daruwalla is to take into consideration the other part of India which remains incomplete if we know not Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism and so on. If Jayanta Mahapatra seems to be inclined towards Odisha and Odia culture and thought, landscape and scenery, Keki N. Daruwalla seems to be inclined towards U.P. as for posting and landscapic imagery and so much beholden to Maharashtra and Gujarat as for Parsi dispersion and searching of roots and nativity and tradition.

If we go through the poems of Keki N. Daruwalla, we shall come to feel it that the dramatic monologue, internal rhyme-scheme and tougher exterior which he employs for his poetry take him to the pedestal of Robert Browning and his poems and the violence, cruelty and wolfish wrap of Ted Hughes-like imagery and metaphor present the other side of the creation. A modern poet, he cannot be laid bare of so easily as we think about. Daruwalla's heart is not at all a Blakian heart, so full of childish innocence and ignorance, nor that of Vaughan looking up to God in thankfulness and astonishment as for to mark the retreat shaded with palm trees, nor Herrickan eve-praying with the daffodils in the evening to part ways, but is one of its kind, Ted Hughesian indeed, but without any Sylvia Plath to be dodged and betrayed, as Hughes did it to a nervous patient so treacherously. The call of the wild he hears by slinging the gun over the shoulder; the hyenas giving calls at dark eve into the forests, the roars and growls of tigers and lions and the deer fleeing for life is the scenery of his poetry and this too is a truth which but we cannot negate it. The rule of the jungle only the junglees, jungle-dwelling ones know it well, what it happens

therein, deep into the forests. Survival of the fittest, is the focal point of brooding. The wild will remain wild, treacherous and impregnable, brutal, bloody and bestial. There is nothing that you can do, nor I can. The other violence lies nurtured within as man too is called an animal and sometimes when spurred on or provoked, it comes to in terms of mob violence and gunfire. As a poet, Daruwalla is a tragedian as because his is a tragic vision of life, seen through adverse conditions, situations, circumstances and times. There is nothing as the Hamletian dilemma of to be or not to be; the sense of guilt taking over. He is hard of heart and bold enough as the barrel of the gun will speak forth. There is nothing as daya-maya; a policeman on duty with the revolver stuck into the waist is he Daruwalla the poet. The ups and downs of the poetic diagram show him in different shreds of thought and reflection. The two-forked facets of his poetry, the widening horizons, diversifying dimensions and broadening spectrums of his delving are beyond our deliberation. The satiric tone, laughing mockery, ironic tinge and tougher talk are the salient features of his poetry. Toughened stand and hardened heart do it all; complete the process, leaving no scope for sentimentality to creep in. The hawk, the kite and the vulture, not the scarecrow, are therein and he tries to see all though that landscape and vision. The poet does not shed crocodile's tears as for feminism sake. It is very difficult to say who is really a feminist in the right sense of the term. Are they not all for namesake just? Feminism has now turned into a wolf's cry or may it that the shepherd boy is crying that the wolf ahs come, has come as a boyish prank. Hearing the call, a few will turn up naturally, but a day comes when the wolf appears really and he calls for help, but none comes to his rescue as for taking it be false. Similar is the case with feminism and the so-called, media-savvy paparazzi feminists. Draupadi as a small poem from Map-Maker speaks it all, how the style and the tenor of his writing:

The travails of Draupadi
are never-ending.
It seems—some people have it
in their bleeding stars:
first exploited by the Pandavas,
five to one,
then by the Kauravas,
hundred to one
and now by the feminists
in millions.

(Keki N.Daruwalla, *Collected Poems (1970-2005)*, Penguin Books, India, New Delhi, 2006, p.340)

A globe-trotter, a tour-taker, an adventurer, he is like Tennyson's Ulysses or the ancient mariner of Coleridge, holding the hand, telling the tales of different climes, nationalities, historical myths and alienations, but not at all with any kind of remorse or expiation. Wrath and anger, bloodshed and violence are just elementary to all. In his thought and vision, he can move to Iran, Palestine, Syria and others. Daruwalla is not a writer like Wordsworth will write *To The Skylark* and Shelley who will *To A Skylark*, he is a poet of the hawk, the kite and the vulture ruminating over, meditating and swooping down to catch and take a hold of not the vegetarian stuffs, but the non-

vegetarian things. But the depleting population of the vultures maraud the self of the poet. The tight and compact poems which he has given are not at all easy to be handled with. The silence of the curfew-clamped towns, manless streets, shops shut down, the palaquin-bearers taking the cholera-patients away from the rural areas and the Ghagra in spate, the flood waters swirling and swerving, corroding the banks and engulfing a vast tract of land by inundating it are the scenery of his. The Robert Frostian snowy, eve-time mystery and beauty of the woods not, but one with the calls of hyenas, tigers, jackals and wolfs is the poetic space of the poet. Blake's lamb and the child will fear to dare into.

The Professor Condoles is one of those representative poems of Daruwalla where the protagonist taking an accident tries to define what it is tragedy, how does it come to all of a sudden keeping the people so benumbed and awestricken, blood gets spilled over, left out with nothing to do and nothing to complain against fate and destiny:

Your brother died, you said?
Eleven years old and run over by a car?
I am so terribly sorry to hear it!

(Keki N. Daruwalla, Winter Poems, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1980, p.58)

Such is the masculine verve, fervour, strength and vigour of the poet, that his condensed and cramming poetic statements have drawn praise from not only the critics from India, but from foreign, as such Robert Graves, James Finn Cotter, C. Wrightman and others. The Unrest of Desire, though of just three stanzas, covers in the psychological things. The words, such as the unrest of desire, shadow in the heart, cave-impulse at the mouth and whatever mask you slap upon your face can show it all about his diction and phraseology. Psychological insight, probing temperament and facial reading which he applies in while dealing with the small poem named The Unrest of Desire add to it differently. The poet means to say it that internal disturbances or feelings going underneath themselves reveal it what it is taking place at the inward level. The embers can never be kept hidden under the cover of the ashes. The things of the heart the face will speak it up. There is nothing as that can keep it hidden or may conceal it. Even if one puts on the mask to hide himself, one day that too will de-mask automatically. The inner conscience can never negate it. Truth will hammer down out the things lying hidden and the outer plasters will break forth to fall down. The slabs of concrete cannot keep it hidden. An attempt to give it some outlook of an aboriginal art too will fail finally and the truth will come to light. The tongue will automatically click out, may be it a slip of wording. Inner tumult and turbulence taking over can never be hidden. The face is the speaker itself and the eye the indicator. Let us how see he takes to in the poem The Unrest of Desire selected in The Keeper of the Dead collection:

You can't erase the burn. It will char your dreams
however you bury the shadow in the heart.

(Crossing of Rivers and The Keeper of the Dead, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1991, p.43)

Interrogating Kingship in *King Lear* **Sanjay Mukherjee**

Every new reading is a misreading in that a new reading nearly always modifies very often challenges and sometimes even goes to the length of rejecting a previous reading. The second half of the 20th century, in particular, has witnessed & vigorously participated in what may be called ‘critical quarrels’ and specially Shakespeare is being subjected to these critical quarrels since the late 1970s. Each reading or theory, to be more precise, has mischaracterized not just literary theory but also the nature of literary theory’s relation to Shakespeare. All the major theoretical movements of the last century — from formalism and structuralism to deconstruction and actor-network theory, from Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis to feminism and queer theory, from Marxism and poststructuralist Marxism to new historicism and postcolonial theory — have developed key aspects of their methods in dialogue with Shakespeare. Both “New Historicism” and “Cultural Materialism” that emerged in the early 1980s as theoretical and interpretive practices seek to understand literary texts of early modern i. e. Renaissance literature *historically* and *reject* the formalizing influence of previous literary studies, including New Criticism, Structuralism and Deconstruction, all of which in varying ways & degrees privilege the literary text and place only secondary emphasis on historical and social context. Traditional separations of literary and non-literary texts, “great literature” and “popular literature” are also fundamentally challenged. Thus theory almost like a ‘virus has invaded Shakespeare’. But by keeping myself aloof from the contemporary ‘critical quarrels’, I propose to make a rather humanistic reading of *King Lear*.

King Lear is definitely a political play dealing with the theme of kingship, but here the theme has been explored from an altogether different perspective, as Shakespeare is not so much concerned with Tudor despotism as with going back to a much older tradition in which a king should possess moral and inward qualities which would entail complete and willing subordination from the subjects. Lear is a king of ancient Britain. Naturally his kingship is seen as something far from the hierarchic structure of the state prevailing during the reign of Elizabeth or James I. By following this traditional concept, Shakespeare seeks to uphold what a king should be. He seems to suggest that a king is a ‘representative man’. In the words of Danby,

“he [a king] must be the fullest human expression of the community that co-operates to maintain him... The king thus stands for man at his best. And he stands for that which is best in man – the apex of mind”.¹

This idea of the king is more moral than political. Lear, however, lacks these virtues required of a king. At the very outset he is found to be of a ‘corrupt’ nature; inordinate power has corrupted him, as he has so long lived in the world of flattery. Kenneth Muir rightly observed, “... the appetite for flattery grows by what it feeds on”.² So it is quite natural for him to banish those namely Cordelia and Kent who refuse to flatter him. Lear thus violates the duties of a king; he is totally devoid

'knowledge' and 'reason' which he himself considers to be the 'marks of sovereignty'. Being bereft of knowledge and reason, Lear gives up his throne to the Machiavels who have a common way of seeing people as divested of all quality except the latter's relation to the former's ends and thereby Lear brings about a discord in the state which inevitably brings on discord in man.

Danby argues that 'the king should be representative man, the expression of every man's natural honesty and as such the embodiment of the health of the state – a health of diverse parts coupled with blessed concord'.³ This disruption of the relation between the Governor and the political society to which he belongs results in a break-down of the individual on the one hand and the social and political sphere on the other. Shakespeare seems to suggest here that a ruler is not merely set over the people he rules but also related to the society for which he is appointed and is supposed to perform his office. Lear - the disordered man – brings about disorder not only in his family but also in the state making confusion between **the two bodies of a king** -- one physical, the other political, which was connected to the spiritual and the divine right of kings. Drawing analogies between the family and the state, it can be argued that Lear's division of the state divides his family. Naturally we are provoked to think about the figure of the father, and then the correlative figure of the monarch, the "father" of one's country. But the play in any way makes the analogies difficult, suggesting that the state and the family are not so easily equated here. It is evident that Shakespeare could not in any way free himself from the moral and social bias of medieval thought that a ruler should be concerned with the common weal and accordingly the health of a state depends on the mutual relationship of the ruler and the ruled. Thus the theory of the ruler's accountability not merely to God but also to the people which was derived from the Greek, Roman and Christian traditions still continued in the political thought of the sixteenth century.

Lear's fool-hardiness alienates him from others. In the very opening scene, when Kent, who has ever honoured Lear as his king, loved him as a father, followed him as a master and thought of him in his prayers as his great patron, protested against the rash and idiotic action of the king, Lear becomes a monster of rage and banishes a truly well-meaning subject. Kent had started in a very polite and reverential way but as soon as Lear warned him saying "The bow is bent and drawn, make from the shaft" (I, i, 143), Kent at once became rude, unmannerly and blunt:

... be Kent unmannerly,

When Lear is mad, what wouldst thou do, old man? (I, i, 145 – 146).

This shift from 'Royal Lear' to 'thou and 'old man' was very significant in their mutual relationship. The use of 'thou' in place of 'you' was "an un-Godly token of un-Christian inequality among men" in the seventeenth century. Angus McIntosh argued that "To an audience of the time Kent's use of 'thou' here must in itself have conveyed a spine-chilling effect of lese-majesty."⁴ So, Kent's violation of the allegiance befitting a subject was caused by the violation of the duties of kingship. The problem springs from not unruly subject, but unruly monarch, as in Buchanan's view, though expressed in a different context, sovereignty derives from and remains

with the people; the king who exercises power against their will is a tyrant and should be deposed: "Rebellions there spring less from the people than from the rulers, when they try to reduce a kingdom which from earliest times had always been ruled by law to an absolute and lawless despotism."⁵

Having occupied almost a God-like status in society, Lear is not in a position to go beyond flattery and formality and to accept lesser mortals as his equals, because even when he has taken up the decision of abdicating "power, / Pre-eminence, and all the large effects / That troop with majesty" (I, i, 130 - 132), Lear retains and clings to "the name and all the additions to a king". Lear fails to realise that the name and all the additions to a king are nothing but the external signs of the power of a king and they appear to be absurd as soon as a king is detached from actual power. Francis Barker points out that "Lear implausibly attempts to retain the cultural form of king and even the political authority of that form without the substantial, institutional, instrumental, military, social and economic power of the crown...."⁶ Naturally, here we have the reduced spectacle of a reduced king and this spectacle is a reflection of kingship at stake. The gradually reducing stature of the king becomes more conspicuous in the caustic and satirical remarks of the Fool. The Fool points out to Lear: "Thou art an O without a figure." and also to their relative status by saying that "I am a fool, thou art nothing." Then again, the Fool's reply --- "Lear's shadow" to Lear's poignant questions - "Does any here know me?" or "Who is it that can tell me who I am?" is both suggestive and ambiguous, because the Fool may mean that he is the faithful shadow of Lear even in his adversaries, so also he may imply that Lear has been reduced to the position of a shadow of his former self.

But I think, to consider *King Lear* as 'a play of dispossession' is not justified. Ultimately he learns the truth about himself and the world. "Lear's violent dislocation from the social framework and the ideology which defined him as king makes the growth and discovery possible."⁷ Though sometimes Lear's pathetic assertion of kingship is heard as in: "Ay, every inch a king" or in "Come come; I am a king, masters, know you that?", he, however, ultimately realises that 'a king is merely a man' and it is through suffering that he learns this reality. The relentless fury to which he is exposed awakens in him all sorts of moral anguish and repentance for his past deeds. He feels for his poor boy and scorns to have shelter for his own bare head. He learns to feel and to pray for the miserable and houseless poor. Through his knowledge of his kinship with animals, he gains a wide and sweeping sympathy on the tempest-riven heath. The falseness of flattery and brutality of authority which he as a king enjoyed come to be revealed to him. His passionate words for suffering humanity redeem the glory of the tragic king. From the consciousness of self-deception, false sentiment and tinsel of kingship and authority, he rises to win his purgatorial reward.

Shakespeare is not so much concerned here with the problem of revenge, rebellion, dynastic succession or regicide so pronounced in his other plays. Jonathan Dollimore may read the play as a critique of a monarchy that is out of touch with the common people. Ralph Berry describes the system of order that exists in the play as a "theatre of monarchy" and says that the tragedy arrives because it is "precisely a play

of old age, for its subject is responsible for arteriosclerotic structures of rule that malfunction through their rigidity. Nevertheless, the failure lies in that rigidity, not in the structures themselves.”⁸ He here rather shows that Lear is a rightful and a good king whose nature is “not the ideal but the human, natural, capable of corruption, error, rescue and regeration.”⁹ *King Lear* is neither a ‘tragedy of wrath’, nor a ‘tragedy of old age’, nor even a ‘tragedy of kingship’, though in the early part *King Lear* appears to be a ‘tragedy of kingship’; but in the later part it is the restoration of true kingship which has been exhibited. When Lear was actually a king, he definitely lacked the genuine royal qualities. “Titular king in itself is meaningless.”¹⁰ But Lear out of office is in a position to acquire complete humanity and thereby can discover his relationship with the poor, naked suffering wretches and this discovery is neither not merely moral but also political. L. C. Knights has suggested “This directness of relationship ... is the only alternative to a predatory power-seeking whose necessary end is anarchy”¹¹ Ultimately Lear does establish his kingly stature and completes not merely the moral but political learning process. It is in this way Lear has been able to gain ‘knowledge’ and ‘reason’ – the marks of sovereignty and accordingly becomes the ‘apex of the mind’. Whether we agree with Clare Asquith’s suggestion that *King Lear* is an unvarnished dramatisation of the corrupt state of James’s England or not, *King Lear* is not so much a dramatisation of the theme of kingship as the restoration of kingship. Shakespeare seems to have presented a picture of his ideal king in the figure of King Lear only during his ‘ripened manhood’.

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A Muse to the poet: 'One rare fair woman'¹ in Thomas Hardy's life

Sudip Kr. Das

Florence Ellen Hungerford Henniker (1855-1923) played a considerable role in Thomas Hardy's poetic career. It is interesting to note here that Florence Henniker was named after her godmother, Florence Nightingale, the great 'lady with the lamp', whom her father had persistently tried to marry. Thomas Hardy and Florence Henniker sustained a strong relationship between each other so long Florence Henniker lived. It smacked of friendship as well as wistful love on the part of Hardy whereas Florence Henniker never seemed to go beyond the boundary demarcated by her devotion to a great man of letters and the consequent enthusiasm at his writing. It is also worthwhile to note here that Hardy met Florence Henniker as a married woman.²

We do not expect that a man of reticence like Hardy would have confided on paper about the relationship. The strong emotions aroused in him by Florence Henniker were not much expressed in Hardy's private letters and in the journals. We find them recorded in his poetry. This can be said about Hardy's whole life; if one tries to trace the fabrics of his life, one will find them recorded not in his novels and short stories but in his poetry. Hardy's second wife, Florence Dugdale Hardy referred to at least two poems, 'A Broken Appointment' and 'A Thunderstorm in Town' which can be directly associated with Florence Henniker.

You did not come,
And marching Time drew on, and wore me numb
Yet less for loss of your dear presence there
Than that I thus found lacking in your make
That high compassion which can overbear
Reluctance for pure lovingkindness' sake
Grieved I, when, as the hope-hour stroked its sum,
You did not come.

You love not me,
And love alone can lend you loyalty;
I know it and knew it. But unto the store
Of human deeds divine in all but name,
Was it not worth a little hour or more
To add yet this: Once you, a woman, came
To soothe a time-torn man; even though it be
You love not me?
('A Broken Appointment')

Like most of Hardy's poems, it is both highly personal and universal, that is to say it addresses something in all lovers who have at any time or another been 'stood up' and disappointed. 'Lovingkindness' was one of Hardy's favourite words which he attributed to Florence Henniker.

In 'He Wonders about Himself', Hardy seems to regard himself as a puppet, a plaything of Chance, just as he regarded Jude. The date and the incidental allusion suggest that he was thinking of Mrs. Henniker. 'Come Not; Yet Come!' was a song of a slightly earlier date, occasioned by the 'beautiful large photographs' of Florence Henniker which she sent Hardy herself. 'At an Inn' probably recalls their visit to Winchester, though of this one cannot be certain. 'The Month's Calendar' was perhaps occasioned by Mrs. Henniker; the ending of the poem probably originated in the realization that Mrs. Henniker could not return Hardy's affection. In 'Death Divided' and 'Last Love-Word' we may find obvious association with Mrs. Henniker. Let us read the last two lines from 'Last Love-Word':

When that first look and touch,
Love, doomed us two !

'A Thunderstorm in Town' conveys the poet's momentary impulse or wistful fantasy.

In general, though the poems record moods and fancies, they clearly manifest that Hardy harboured feeling of profound affection for Mrs. Henniker, which, he soon realized, could never be returned. The frequency of notes and letters in the early phase of their relationship – there are twenty-four extant letters from June, 1893 to December, 1893 – and the suggestion that he might become the mentor of her architectural skill, all bear testimony to a strong affection which continued for at least another three years. By 1896, Hardy's ardour presumably cooled.

As for one rare fair woman, I am now but a thought of hers,
I enter her mind and another thought succeeds me that she prefers;
Yet my love for her in its fullness she herself even did not know;
Well, time cures hearts of tenderness, and now I can let her go.

('Wessex Heights')

Still he remained her good friend till her death. The perceptive reader of the poems may follow the palpitating drama strewn with tragic irony – the barrenness of their relationship in the autumnal days of their marriage – they struggled to protect themselves by barricading their hearts, each against the other's.

Florence Henniker seems to have handled Hardy's vibrant emotion with tactful firmness. There are references, both in Hardy's letters and in his poems, to some occasion on which she made it clear that she could never return his affection. 'A Broken Appointment' and 'The Month's Calendar', both, point to the 'one-sidedness' of their relationship.

For then it was
You let me see
There was good cause
Why you could not be
Aught ever to me !

('The Month's Calendar')

Yet Mrs. Henniker 'provocatively' sent her admirer gifts of books, an inkstand and other objects – as well as her photographs. She was perhaps flattered that the leading novelist of the time paid admiring court to her. How far she realized that she was the embodiment of Hardy's life-long fantasy of the lady whom 'the poor man' loves, a subject of novel and poems.

The lasting loyalty of Thomas Hardy and Florence Henniker, each to the other, suggests an unusual affinity, steady affection, high personal regard, keenly shared interests and – perhaps the most critical factor of a relationship in the long run – susceptibility to, and respect for, differences of outlook. F.B.Pinion says that their full story can never be known; Hardy's letters to her are only a manifesto of one of the most fascinating relationships in literary history.

Notes

1. 'One rare fair woman' is coined from Hardy's poem, 'Wessex Heights'.
2. She met Hardy in Dublin at the Vice-regal Lodge in May, 1893. There is no definite proof that they met earlier.

**A Journey from inaction (Akarma) to action (karma): Hamlet and
Arjuna in the light of 'Niskam Karma'
Debdas Roy**

Nothing is more remarkable than the way in which *Srimad Bhagavadgita* and *Hamlet* keep a grip on people's mind through the ages. They have stood up to the diligent and skeptical scrutiny of the centuries. Both the texts illumine some of our concerns regarding our ways of life and the meaning of human existence. Of course, there are some fundamental points of incompatibility between the two works. There is generic difference. *Srimad Bhagavadgita* forms part of an epic while *Hamlet* belongs to the category of dramatic poetry. Arjuna, one of the chief 'characters' in *Srimad Bhagavadgita* attains divine grace. But the concept of grace does not match with the idea of tragedy because a tragic hero, who attains grace and salvation, fails to arouse emotions proper to tragedy. A tragic hero attains a higher vision of life but he never attains salvation which does damage to his status as a tragic hero. Salvation weakens cathartic effect. Even while admitting these differences between the two texts, one is struck by their thematic connections in some points.

Like Arjuna, Hamlet is a "delicate and tender prince" (4. 4. 48)¹, though the latter is much more complex as a character. Both of them are crippled by their "speculative intellect and sensitivity" (Foakes 287) in a 'masculine' world of cut-throat enmity where 'conscience' is the other name of 'cowardice'. Let us have a look into the initial circumstances they had been pitted against. Both of them try to understand reality in the face of trying circumstances – a critical circumstance of war. They had to raise war against their respective 'relatives' – a war labeled by them as 'impious' and 'sinful'. They are dominated by a reigning feeling of doubt which leads to wise melancholy. Definitely it is a paradoxical kind of doubt which, if cleared, offers a glimpse of the ultimate truth. A man who is not capable of doubt is not worthy of faith. This is true of both Arjuna and Hamlet.

Both are 'sad' at the beginning. The first chapter of *Srimad Bhagavadgita* has been named "Arjuna Visad Yoga" and in the final Act of *Hamlet* we come across the words, "the bravery of his grief" (5.2.80). When the holy war is about to begin Arjuna sees in both the armies his near relatives. At the sight of these loved and respected kinsmen Arjuna's mind begins to reel and he is full of sadness. He does not want to gain happiness by slaying his kinsmen. He is not going to shoulder the consequences of sin caused by the slaying of his own extended family. He argues that the people warring against him, with their understanding clouded (ironically though his own understanding is no less clouded at this stage) by greed, do not perceive the evil of destruction of their own families. Arjuna thinks that he will be committing the same crime as the supporters of Duryodhana are about to commit if he fights and kills. It seems that Arjuna, at this stage, is a follower of the Biblical injunction "Thou shalt not kill" without knowing it.

¹ *Hamlet*. Ed. Philip Edwards. Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1984. Print. has been followed throughout for textual references.

Hamlet too, on the other hand, is a follower of *Srimad Bhagavadgita* (“Cast off this petty faint-heartedness and wake up O vanquisher of foes” I.3)² without knowing it. Both of them are possessed by a quasi-religious inhibition of not taking up knife to take life and *Hamlet* and *Srimad Bhagavadgita* trace how their respective heroes get reconciles to their respective inhibitions. In the opening scene of *Hamlet* the prince is sad at heart – a sadness that may have some sort of an inverse connection with Shakespeare’s ‘tragic loss of a beloved son’. He has sensed that his father has been assassinated. Like Arjuna, Hamlet is possessed by an “obstinate condolment” (1. 1. 93) and “unmanly grief” (1. 1. 94). Irresolute, paralysed in will, unhealthy, morbid, neurotic, a dreamer, Hamlet is “a very disturbing figure in the context of western ideologies that value man of decision and action” (Foakes 290). Hamlet has been appropriated critically as “sensitive, intellectual, and feminine” (French 158, Foakes 24-26, Thompson and Taylor 42-50). Doubtful about the “commandment” (1.5.102) of the “questionable Ghost” (Foakes 287) and at heart disinterested in revenge, Hamlet is reluctant to kill his uncle because he will involve himself in the same sin as committed by the latter. Like Arjuna who was goaded into action by his ‘good angel’, the Divine Charioteer, Hamlet too was urged by his father-spirit to act. This Christian moral pattern is tacitly operative even in the first act of *Hamlet*.

Both the heroes question the efficacy of killing kinsmen for mere worldly benefit. Arjuna was reminded by his ‘good angel’ of his duty as a member of the warrior-class whose duty it is to raise a righteous war for the restoration of virtue and peace in the realm. Arjuna was reminded that his sadness and reluctance emanates from a deep-rooted “delusion” – an incapacity to look beyond. Hamlet was also reminded of his duty as the prince of Denmark and as a son of the father who has been wronged. Hamlet’s reaction to the Ghost was like a “religious conversion” (Alexander 45-46). Both of them learn the lesson that one can attain integrity only by discharging one’s avowed duty. By neglecting his avowed duty man degrades himself. One is struck by the fertile nature of their sadness. It is remarkable that Arjuna’s dejection has been called “Yoga”. It is a kind of aided and creative dejection that leads one to reflect upon and realize the fundamental truths of life and existence. Hamlet’s dejection is equally creative and poetic. Hamlet himself hints at the “particular” nature of his own melancholy (“I have that within which passes show” 1. 1.85) cast of mind when he says that the external aspects of grief fail to “denote me truly” (1. 1. 83). Claudius refers to Hamlet’s sorrows as “clouds that still hang on you” (1. 1. 65). To Polonius Hamlet’s melancholia is “pregnant sometimes” (2. 2. 203). It is a sorrow in which there is a “happiness that often madness hits on” (2. 2. 204). It is a state of mind from which there arise some questions which do not come from “reason and sanity” (2. 2. 205). Claudius says –

There is something in his (Hamlet) soul
O’ver which his melancholy sits on brood. (3. 1. 159)

² *Srimad Bhagavadgita* . Ed. Swami Ramsukhdas. Gorakhpur: Gita Press, 2010 (Reprint). Print. has been followed throughout for textual references.

The biblical image of brooding has something to do with the 'pregnant' nature of Hamlet's melancholy. There is "bravery" in the grief of both Arjuna and Hamlet.

The world-weariness of both Hamlet and Arjuna is worth discussing. Hamlet says –

How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world! (1. 2. 133-134)

Like Arjuna Hamlet prefers death to anything against the 'Everlasting' (1. 2. 131). Hamlet deems this world to be an "unweeded garden/That grows to seed." He thinks in terms of Satyr – grotesque, hybrid, half-human creatures who attend on Dionysus. It will not be irrelevant to say in this context that the classical references in the play are not merely fortuitous but are integrated into the Christian heart of the play. As Foakes says that in Hamlet "classical contextualization goes deeper" (290). It is also significant that Arjuna thinks in terms of how 'hybrids' ('Varnasankarah') are born when "the women of a family become perverse" (I, 41). Hamlet, on the other hand, can't pardon his mother for making "the royal bed of Denmark" a "couch for luxury and damned incest" (I.5.83). Hamlet too is opposed to the idea of 'mixing' "thy commandment" with "baser matter" (I.5.104).

Hamlet thinks in terms of baked pies for the funeral (Thrift, thrift, Horatio, the funeral bak'd-meats/ Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables 1. 2. 180-181). Arjuna also thinks in terms of ritual offerings of rice-balls and water offered to the deceased at the funeral rites. He is of the opinion that "Varna Sankarah" or bastards lead the family line towards hell. The popular meaning of the term "Varna Sankarah" is a mixture of castes. But the connotation of the word is "a mixture of the contrary and irreconcilable elements". Both Arjuna and Hamlet denounce the mixture of contraries – an incestuous mixture traceable in the relationship between Gertrude and Claudius. The Ghost of King Hamlet describes Claudius as "incestuous" ("damned incest" 1.5.83), "adulterate" and full of "shameful lust". It hates Claudius's marriage as "damned incest" (1. 5. 84). He is weary of the ways of the world. The earth seems to Hamlet "a sterile promontory". It is a weariness that looks upon 'god-like' man as "quintessence of dust". He is fed up with the vagaries of the world – "scorns of time", "oppressor's wrong", "disprized love", "law's delay", "insolence of office" (3. 1. 70-73) and so on.

The most remarkable aspect of the thematic connection between the two texts lies in the realization on the part of their respective heroes who are ultimately reconciled to the 'war' within. What Arjuna learns during his conversation with the Divine Charioteer is the essence of Pure Reality, as that which is wholly beyond change in nature and the nature-born things and is even eternally immutable and uniform in the midst of the flux in space, time, things, beings and circumstances. Real essence is ever-present in each man, whenever and however, he is. But that is not realized because of 'attachment and aversion' – born of the changeable nature of things in a person. Only on achieving complete freedom from attachment and aversion, it is automatically realized (Ramsukhdas IX-X). This is true of both Arjuna and Hamlet. Both *Srimad Bhagavadgita* and *Hamlet* trace how the 'seeker' becomes 'seer'. Arjuna sheds down his melancholy and inaction because he is convinced of the inevitability of action. Arjuna plunges into an action in which there is little element of a strong personal desire. It is our desire that blurs our vision. An action

without an element of desire enables us to see beyond. This is precisely what Hamlet achieves too towards the end of the play. At last he involves himself in an action which transcends 'attachment' and it elevates Hamlet from the status of an avenger to a man capable of self-less action. He becomes the agent of a course of action already determined. Thus a 'doer' becomes a 'seer'. Hamlet attains to a desireless transcendental state which, according to Indian scriptures, is "nirvikalpa avastha" (Ramsukhdas XIV).

In order to understand "nirvikalpa vastha" one has to understand the nature of the paths for supreme realization. There are three paths – of Action, of knowledge and of Devotion. There are three related bodies – the gross, the subtle and the causal. To employ the three bodies in self-less service is the path of action. In order to accomplish these yogas and attain one's salvation, man has to be endowed with three powers – power to act (strength), power to know (knowledge) and power to believe (faith). Both Hamlet and Arjuna set out by choosing the path of action but fail to act on account of some haziness of vision. They are dominated by an interest in action, but do not know the paradox of the relation between the self and action. Arjuna mistakenly feels that it is upon his action that the life and death of his relatives depend. He fails to recognize that even his own action is a kind of merging of the will in the will of someone who assigns action to everyone. Hamlet also becomes egotistical. He feels that it is upon his action that the state of Denmark depends and that he can set right the fissures of time. Hamlet's "noble and most sovereign reason" (3. 1. 151) is rather, like a jangled bell, "out of time and harsh" (3. 1. 152). Thus his 'inaction' is not the outcome of "weakness of character" (Dover Wilson), or "fatal aestheticism" (Nevo 162), or an inhibition as to the "inescapable condition of man" (Mack) but of something deeper. Hamlet's lack of proper understanding of what he is about to do is the chief reason behind his "crawling between earth and heaven" (3. 1. 125).

It is in the grave-digger scene and thereafter that truth begins to dawn upon Hamlet. That Hamlet was *en route* to his final realization was hinted at when he desisted from killing Claudius while the latter was praying. It reminds us of the 'kshatriya' spirit of fighting on equal terms and 'killing' or 'be killed' in full cognizance and conscience. Like Arjuna who agrees to fight because he now understands the true meaning of action and has emerged wiser, Hamlet realizes the quintessence of dust –

Alexander
died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth
to dust, the dust is earth, of earth we make loam (5. 1. 208-210)

He also alludes to "Imperious Caesar" who is "dead" and "turned to clay" (v.i.180). The implication is that his death is as insignificant as the death of any great man. When challenged by Laertes, Hamlet is quite compose and is no longer "splenitive and rash" (5. 1. 28). Hamlet has now understood that our actions, however heroic they may seem, can little change the scheme of things –

Let Hercules himself do what he may
The cat will mew, and dog will have his day. (5. 1. 228-230)

It is to Horatio that Hamlet unravels the best jewel of his newly developed understanding. He says that in his mind there 'was' a kind of 'fighting' which is over. "He abandons all of his earlier wrestlings with conscience and with the biblical injunction against killing" says Foakes (297). He now understands that "there is a divinity that shapes our ends" (5. 2. 11). He now learns to be worthy of his new-found calling by taking up arms and being the instrument of providence.

This veering towards "fatalism" and "epiphany" (Tobin 11) does not surprise us because Shakespeare who himself 'was attached to a Catholic landowner in Lancashire' (Tobin 4) has kept his readers prepared for this development by referring to both classical (e.g. Hyperion, Jupiter, Mercury, Hercules) and Christian figures (e.g. Cain, "Angels and ministers of grace defend us! 1.4.39) many times in the play and by 'combining' and 'reconciling' his Renaissance conception of man with the Medieval Heaven-centric views at times (e.g. ". . . how like an angel in apprehension, how like a god!" where the climactic structure ascribes the highest place to 'god' in the chain of being, though elsewhere Shakespeare questions the hierarchical place of human beings in creation). From the very beginning Shakespeare has kept his audience prepared by alluding to Heaven, Hell ("sulphurous and tormenting flames") and Purgatory ("burnt and purged away"). The 'commandment' of the Ghost is more 'a mission' than 'a commission' and Hamlet's reaction to the Ghost is "like a religious conversion" (Edwards, 39,45) . Alexander goes to the extent of saying that though the Ghost exhorts Hamlet to kill, it "denounces the idea of revenge killing" (45-46). The plethora of Christian references in the play provokes us to imagine whether the writing desk of the "world's greatest lender" (Tobin 14) was littered with the "bibles, both Bishop's and Geneva" (Tobin 11). I sometimes dare wonder whether Shakespeare used to pour himself over a translated version of the *Srimad Bhagavadgita* along with "the Genesis, the Gospel of St. Matthew, and the book of Revelation" (Tobin 11). Even Hamlet's fatalistic attitude revealed itself when Hamlet thought of himself as subject to the "slings and arrows" of "outrageous Fortune". He understands that there is a higher power in control of us, directing us towards our destination. This recognition drastically modifies Hamlet's earlier assessment of his freedom of action and power to direct his own course. This is a significant development in Hamlet. He feels the presence of the guiding hand of heaven in his own impulsive and unpremeditated actions. He learns to question the utility of man's "willed efforts" and is convinced of its futility. Man's free will is limited. What is required of man is 'good will' which has no opposition with 'god-will'.

It is his final realization of the need of doing a work without attachment that enables Hamlet to look beyond. At the end of the play Hamlet is beyond any purpose of revenge. He has forgotten all enmity and begs forgiveness from Laertus. He is capable of doing this not only because by the 'image' of his 'cause' (5. 2. 76) he sees the 'portraiture of Laertus' but also because he has learnt to shed his ego and ascribe all his actions to 'someone' above us. The phrase 'my cause' needs to be elaborated. By 'my cause' Hamlet does not mean to say merely that Laertus is driven by a similar urge for revenge. "My cause" does not mean vengeance. Hamlet believes that there is little resemblance between his partly-accidental killing of Polonius, Laertus' father and Claudius' premeditated assassination of King Hamlet, father of Prince

Hamlet. As because his conscience is clear and integrity is maintained, Hamlet does not recognize himself as a proposed victim of Laertus. But Hamlet knows that Laertus has been unhinged by sorrow. He forgives Laertus because, like him, he is also a bereaved son. But Hamlet, very much like Arjuna in *Srimad Bhagavadgita* who threw arrow at the feet of his superiors in the enemy camp with a view to seeking their blessings, regains the right attitude towards his enemy. He ‘praises’ his enemy, Laertus, sincerely. He believes that all occurrences show God’s immediate concern and control. He would therefore ‘accept’ and ‘invite’ the circumstance which present themselves and not try to avoid them. He finds special providence (i.e. divine intervention) in such an insignificant matter as “the fall of sparrow” (an allusion to Matthew 10.29). What is important to him is ‘readiness’ . “Since no man of aught he leaves knows, what is’t to leave betimes? Let be” says Hamlet (5. 2. 195).

Laertus, Hamlet’s erstwhile adversary and now turned into Hamlet’s alter-ego, seems to echo Hamlet’s realization –

Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet
 Mine and my father’s death come not upon thee,
 Nor thine on me. (5. 2. 308-310)

Hamlet’s response is equally significant –

Heaven make thee of it. I follow thee (5.2.311)

Hamlet has attained to such a state of understanding that he dies ‘satisfied’. His action is now self-less. This, according to *Srimad Bhagavadgita* , is “Niskam – karma”. He calls death a ‘felicity’. Foakes terms it as “resigning himself to providence”. In my opinion it is more than that. I would prefer the terms “reordering”, “rejuvenating” and “readying” of the self. The word “resigning” smacks of morbid helplessness. This sort of reconciliation with death is not to be confused with the death wish of the poets through the ages. There is no nightingale’s lure here. It dawns from a rich understanding of the eternal cycle of life and death. Hamlet now feels that there is life after death in ‘heaven’. The truth about which *Srimad Bhagavadgita* is so eloquent – the soul is not slain even when the body is – dawns upon Hamlet. To him revenge becomes secondary. Hamlet is at last freed of his ‘diseased conscience’ – a freedom loved by any man, Pagan or Christian, Indian or Danish.

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The Apprentice and Awakened Conscience

Mrs Sunita Tiwari

Arun Joshi is a novelist writing in contemporary context. His novels deal with the socio cultural problems of post independence India. He notices the collapse of the age old values resulting in the disjoined, purposeless and absurd universe. He has portrayed the evils of materialism, cynicism, escapism and man's search for identity. Arun Joshi finds the world full of exploitation, resulting in chaos, confusion and anarchy. Man is totally frustrated and alienated because of being separated from his fellow beings. The writer is pained to see such a situation. He has tried to provide a solution to this by delving deep into Indian philosophy. Vedanta philosophy, the teachings of the Gita and the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi has great influence on Arun Joshi. He strongly believes that individual's action have effect on others and on oneself. He reveals a world where man is confronted by the self and the questions of his existence. His search is directed to the recesses of human psyche and he enters as a great artist of psychological insight.

Arun Joshi has withdrawn from the outer world to the inner world to explore the problems of human existence. He probes deeper into the unravelling diverse facets of crises in modern man's life. Joshi is aware of man's feeling of anxiety and alienation. They are the steps in the quest for a meaning in life. As a novelist his primary concern is with the effort's of an anguished man to find moorings for himself in the tumultuous sea of life. In The Apperentice Joshi delineates the agonising predicament of his protagonist, Ratan Rathore, who is lost in the world full of chaos, corruption, hypocrisy and absurdity. He becomes an existential character, being alienated from his self as well as his surroundings. He uses the confessional tone and exemplifies the doctrine that man's salvation depends on the course of life he chooses to follow.

Ratan Rathore is both the hero and anti hero of the novel. He probes into his inner life and accepts the weaknesses of his character. He sees himself as chicken hearted and is repulsed by the degeneration of his character. He is a man of the practical world, pragmatic to the core; he rises in hierarchy by making deals and sucking up the bosses. As he comes face to face to face with the social reality he conforms to the phoney social norms. He finds his freedom in his choice which is the essence of life. He is torn between the two conflicting choices being the son of an idealistic, patriotic father and a very practical mother. He wants to live a life like his father, but soon his dreams are shattered and idealism dissipated. Struggle for a job confronts him with reality of life; the honour of being a son of a freedom fighter is of no practical purpose. Wherever he goes he is "examined, interviewed, interrogated and rejected" (29). He realises that though the posts are advertised they are filled by people who are preselected. Thus begins his life as an apprentice clerk. He works hard to please his Superintendent, 'harder than almost anybody in the department except the Superintendent himself' (35). His journey in the office begins and further corruption of his soul is just a matter of time. He becomes out and out a man of the world, thoroughly possessed by the social and cultural drives- totally alienated from and dispossessed of his genuine self of sincerity of existence and purity of existence. He betrays his colleagues for a promise of confirmation of his job from his bosses.

He further loses his identity with his promise to marry his boss's niece. His journey of downfall is very smooth, cunning, deceptive and easygoing. Ratan represents the modern generation in which people feel desensitized and experience the gradual erosion of the moral fabric of society, self interest replaces sacrifice, fraud and deception replace honesty, corrupt manoeuvres replace courage and morality.

Ratan undergoes conflict of mind in choosing between the higher ideals of his father and his instinct to survive in the modern world. He exercises his choice to pursue his material ends on the Sartrean line of existentialistic ideology. His hypocrisy knows no bounds. The tragedy is that he is sinking into the abyss of darkness of corruption, exploitation and bourgeois filth and yet thinks that he is swimming. As he confesses: 'We sink and we think we are swimming' (53). But this does not go on for long. The war is lost. Ratan had taken enormous bribe for the clearance of sub standard war material meant for the front. The Brigadier, Ratan's childhood friend suffers a nervous breakdown on return from war. He is admitted to a hospital. Ratan feels the pain and suffering of another person when he meets him. Brigadier is held responsible of connivance in the supply of defective war material as he deserts his post. He has to face a court martial. Ratan is asked by the Superintendent of Police to confess his crime and save his friend. Ratan could not muster the courage to confess. The Brigadier is a true and best friend of Ratan. He had once saved his life when he was attacked by hooligans. Brigadier is a strong man but he falls to pieces on the false charges against him and shoots himself. Ratan thinks that he is not an ordinary criminal but a martyr who is 'expected to make amends to redress the terrible wrong that he had inflicted on so many men' (114). He is in great stress and mental agony. He tries to confess but is not able to do so due to shame and fear. Ratan views his misdeeds as 'little adulteries of the soul that did not count' (117). He becomes alien to himself with the news of death of Brigadier. His existence is tormented by the question, 'Why did I take bribe?' (61). Though he consoles himself by seeing that all the ministers 'secretaries and officials are neck deep in corruption, he is worried about the sharp slump in morality of people. This existential dimension is made clear with this conflict in his mind. He is finally responsible for his deeds as he betrays his conscience. Ratan becomes a typical modern man and his self betrayal leads him to a feeling of being a non entity.

Ratan is lost in the dark labyrinth of life. He always wants to do the right thing, yet fails. Depressed and frustrated, he interprets life in terms of algebra where it is equated to those complex sums, all directed at finding the missing element which is related and interrelated with each other. He humbly acknowledges his responsibility. Arun Joshi has expressed his views in an interview, 'Individual actions have effects on others and one. So one cannot afford to continue with an irresponsible existence but has to commit oneself at some point' (Bannerji: IV). After painful soul churning he comes to know that the real culprit is none other than himself. 'To know good and to know evil and to choose evil... Who does this choosing but ourselves' (142). Despite the chaotic situation, the choice lies with the individual and when one chooses evil, it boomerangs. The writer has solved the problems of life with the teachings of Gandhi. Ratan follows the way of *Bhakti* for the purification of soul. Every morning before going to office, he goes to the temple, wipes shoes of the congregation and begs forgiveness of all those he had harmed, deliberately or unwittingly. This act purges him of his vanity. He does believe this

symbolic act of penance will bring him an absolute humility and genial acceptance of life. His sitting in front of temple signifies his devotion in which the devotee can appease his God by praying. He does not enter the temple but sits outside on the stairs to wipe the shoes. He now starts to live his life on the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi and the Bhagavad Gita. He undergoes expiation and believes that purification of his soul is obtained not by rituals but by making amends. He tries to get rid of bourgeois filth that had settled on him all through his career. The sense of evil in Ratan torments him and forces him to repent for all that he had done. In the end he understands the value of his father's word. Joshi uses the dictum of Gita and Laws of Karma to resolve the dilemma of the protagonist. Ratan evolves into a karmayogi after the realisation of his sin and overcomes despair and alienation. He reaches his affirmation in his apprenticeship as he knows his life may be zero but not necessarily purposeless. The novelist helps his protagonist to overcome self estrangement and social alienation by making him metaphysically involved in the matters of the world. It may be late for him but Ratan continues his struggle. He is positive and re-establishes faith in life. The novel ends with a dawn which is symbolic of regeneration. The greatness of the novelist resides in his having added a social dimension to this novel through his moralistic vision of responsible existence.

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Self-interest: The Real Guide in R.K.Narayan's *The Guide*

Satyanarjan Das

In R.K.Narayan's *The Guide* Raju's statement under the veil of mock-humility 'I'm but an instrument accepting guidance myself'(46), if taken seriously, could expose for the readers the hollowness of the guide identity of him who only poses as a guide in different phases of his life. He just filled the vacant situations, which the people around tempted him to do. He was not at all qualified to guide the tourists, Rosie or the gullible villagers of Mangala. Narayan's ironic use of the title is very significant. If there is any guide in the novel, I think, it is rather the desire to satisfy the self or the desire of self-preservation on the part of the persons who wanted Raju, the fake guide to guide them. They were not initially guided by Raju; but Raju was directed by them or rather their desire to satisfy themselves. At the same time Raju's own urge for self gratification led him to be a guide. There are some carelessly drawn images of the strong urge for self gratification or self-preservation, scattered here and there; they demand our attention.

The tourists were a class of self-conscious, educated people financially more or less able with interest to know the unknown, to see the unseen - to enjoy themselves. The man stretching himself under the awning on the platform of Raju's shop and spending the night that way or 'the man who had gone to the source of the river [and] spoke all night about it'(57) may be taken to be images of tourists with strong urge for self-gratification. They travelled by train and motor car, some of them were very much interested to take snaps with their camera; they were interested not only in the scenic beauty, they also watched the trapping of an elephant herd or a tiger, even wanted to shoot a tiger. There is "the bungalow on top of Mempi with all-glass sides from where you could see a hundred miles and observe wild game prowling around" (62). Raju found some who were poets to watch nature and others who would enjoy nature and at the same time drink. There were also those who brought women there. These merry making fellows were badly in need of a guide. So their urge for enjoyment made a guide out of Raju the shopkeeper. With his titbits of knowledge gained from scraps he managed his profession. In fact, he had little idea about tourism; he admits later his lack of knowledge or bent of mind to be a tourist guide: "Why anyone should want to forgo food and comfort and jolt a hundred odd miles to see some place, I could never understand ...It seemed to me silly to go a hundred miles to see the source of Sarayu when it had taken the trouble to tumble down the mountain and come to our door. I had not even heard of its source till that moment..." (57). He gave statistics out of his head to an innocent man. Whether the dome of a shrine was built in the third century B.C or the style of drapery indicated the third century - it was all the same to Raju. He even varied the information about the same thing 'according to the mood of the hour'. Though he took his tourists to watch elephants, he found no interest in elephants. A knowledgeable tourist always exposed Raju's disqualification. "What is the use of your calling yourself a guide if you do not know...?"(63)

Rosie had a tremendous urge to dance Bharat Natyam which she inherited from her Devdasi tradition. We find the image of Rosie with a strong urge for self-expression, raising her foot and letting it down with a jingling sound, performing in tune with a song from an ancient Sanskrit composition of a lover and lass on the banks of Jamuna when Raju 'could see, through her effort, the magnificence of the composition, its symbolism ...' (125). Raju thinks: "When she indicated the lotus with her fingers, you could almost hear the ripple of water around it"(125). He viewed her as 'a pure abstraction'. Dream of self-expression and self gratification made her embrace Raju in ecstasy as she thought that it was Raju who gave her a new lease of life. The urge for self-assertion was evident in her plea before Marco: "I think I'd be very happy if I could do that. I have so many ideas. I'd like to try. Just as you are trying to . . ." (147). She solicited help from Raju only because she took Raju's interest in art to be serious and she underestimated her ability to manage herself. Raju had little contribution to the making of Nalini – the illustrious Bharat Natyam dancer. He provided her only with the place in the mud hut where she practiced for some months. He proposed to Rosie that she should adopt such a name as would suit the classical dance. And the third thing Raju did was to introduce Nalini in the annual social of Albert Mission College. But Rosie's urge for self-assertion coupled with her passion for art could find itself expressed without this much help. Raju's presence in the story of Rosie's soaring was just incidental. Even Raju admits: "At that time I was puffed up with the thought I had made her. I am now disposed to think even Marco could not have suppressed her permanently; sometime she was bound to break out and make her way"(182). He admits in a similar vein: "I became known because I went about with her, not the other way round"(182). From the time when the Secretary and Treasurer of the union of Albert Mission College came to Rosie to see a little bit of her art Raju found her 'taking charge of their programme' (179) very serious about and careful of the conditions for building up her programme. When he ventures to 'beat time with his hands like a very knowing one'(179), she forbids.

In the last phase of Raju's life as a guide near Mangala the villagers badly need a *Swami* in their life full of misery and problems and despairs. The individual need of Velan as well as the social need for solution of problems and self-preservation project Raju seated before an ancient temple on the bank of Sarayu as a mythical *guru* with 'moral qualities such as good will and readiness to help'(Guerin et al 163). Velan sitting 'two steps below the granite slab on which Raju was sitting cross-legged as if it were a throne, beside an ancient shrine' (5) 'gazing reverentially on his face' or the same man placing before him a basket filled with bananas, cucumbers, pieces of sugar-cane, fried nuts, and a copper vessel brimming with milk may be taken to be images of a gullible Indian looking for some saint doing miracles and providing guidance in life. There is no opportunistic attitude in the action; but an element of self-interest is not absent altogether. Here is the simple logic of the myth-loving mind of a tradition-bound Indian village: "We dig the land and mind the cattle - so far so good, but how can we think philosophies? Not our line, master. It is possible. It is wise persons like your good self who should think for us"(52). They

shift the burden of thinking philosophies, doing miracles and turning their despairs into optimism to the *guru*. They are there to offer *naivedyas* and devotion. Whatever Raju has uttered is taken to be expression of great wisdom or to possess a miraculous power. It started with Velan's sister's compliance in the matter of her marriage; then whatever good happens has been interpreted to have happened under the influence of the holy man.

On Raju's own part what guided him or made him a guide is, again, his urge to satisfy his self - his ego and his luxurious self. He has been occupied in self gratification except for a few days in the last phase of his life. We find in him representation of the Indian middle class individuals of the mid-twentieth century when 'their traditional codes and hierarchies have become fragmented and private, so that no man can any longer fulfil himself in a traditional way' (qtd. in Sen 161). Krishna Sen refers to Kirpal who observes that Raju had been "guilty of upsetting [through] excessive pursuit of *kama* and *artha*" (30). If we read Raju's life in the light of Hindu theology, the working of *mada* or *ahamkara* in his fevered pursuit of material success should also be focussed.

In his childhood Raju had a life of sensuous pleasures –the pleasures of the palate captured in the image of sugar 'kept in an old tin can' or the pleasures of the other senses represented through the image of his journey to the town by a cart enjoying the sound of the bells around the bull's neck and enjoying all the scenes in passing. Though this hunger for innocent pleasures gives way to the urge for the pleasure of self-assertion in the new world of Malgudi differentiated from the traditional one by the advent of railway, his appetite of the palate lurks here and there all through his life.

Raju played the whole day under the shade of the tamarind tree which may be seen as an epitome of the old world India. One day the idyllic setting is disrupted by the trucks parked there which brought red earth for the railway which brought the traditional life, society, economy under the prospect of change. Raju's frowning and driving away of the cowherd from the spot where he had been playing is, as if, emblematic of his self assertion: "I was beginning to have a sense of ownership of the railway, and I didn't want trespassers there"(24). He took charge of the railway stall and handled the affair efficiently. But "selling bread and biscuits and accepting money in exchange seemed to [him]...a tame occupation"(48). He felt that he was 'too good for the task'(48). He was not satisfied with the humble job, earning his livelihood. He began to develop new lines by stocking old magazines and dealing in schoolbooks. Old books and all kinds of printed stuff catering to the school and college students took the place of coconuts. He started to equip his mind by reading 'a certain amount of good stuff' in his stall. He liked to talk to people of the new India – the school and college students and railway passengers. He also loved to hear them speak. But the subjects of conversation were found to be changed from those of 'the state of crops, price of commodities, and litigation' which attracted Raju's father and his customers. The community feeling among Raju's father- the shopkeeper of the hut shop and his customers was now lost. With his death the hut shop was closed by Raju. The customers who came for something to eat or smoke or for a chat about

'the price of grain, rainfall, harvest, and the state of irrigation channels' or old litigations 'wilted away and disappeared'(48). All these indicated the birth of a new Malgudi – a new India. Boys here pursued their studies in Mission College, people traveled by train, a good number of them got interested in pleasure trips to places or trips of devotional or historical interest. Raju found a new job in this world. Raju observes: "It is written on the brow of some that they shall not be left alone. I am one such, I think. Although I never looked for acquaintances, they somehow came looking for me"(55). But if people came looking for him, he himself sort of encouraged them by providing information in spite of knowing nothing about the things. He rationalizes his action by saying that he wanted to be 'pleasant'(55). But actually he wanted to gain importance from the people. On the request of the tourists to help he did not refuse and on the way did not care for his business in the stall. To uphold himself as a full-blown tourist guide he provided the particulars about things of historical interest; fidelity to facts was not at all important to him. He was elated as people attached importance to him: "People come asking for me from Bombay, Madras, and other places, hundreds of miles away. They call me Railway Raju and have told me that even in Lucknow there are persons who are familiar with my name. It is something to become so famous, isn't it, instead of handing out matches and tobacco?"(59) But it was not possible for his mother, an old woman, to realise the new demands of individualism in the new world. Krishna Sen points to "his prioritizing of the demands of the self over those of tradition and society, his preference for money and influence (symbols of individuation and self-assertion) over the claims of caste and family, his commodification of cultural forms as in his setting up Bharat Natyam as an "art business" (162) or faking the role of a sanyasi for personal gain, and especially his easy switching of roles from shopkeeper all the way to swami (unfettered by the limitations of caste or class)" (112).

In the second act in the drama of his self-gratification Raju was in pursuit of *kama* first and then *artha* and *mada*. From the very first sight he was in love for Rosie, Marco's wife, who appeared to him to be a 'divine creature' 'lovely and elegant', 'a vision'. He waxes poetic in recollecting the memory of that woman. His whisper close to her face gave vent to his feelings: "...life is so blank without your presence."(73) He pays compliments in hyperbolic terms: "All night I didn't sleep...The way you danced, your form and figure haunted me all night."(72) He 'sandwiched' his love between his 'appreciations of her art'. Raju in close proximity with Rosie in darkness waiting for games from glass veranda is an image of one excited with the feeling of love. "Oh, the whispers, the stars, and the darkness—I began to breathe heavily with excitement." (79) Raju's waxing lyrical at the sight of purple play of colour in the sky, his sitting with a bowed head under a reeling sensation caused by a touch of Rosie's hand, his pinning the silver brooch on her sari are scattered images of love intoxicated. The husband's callous indifference towards her gave Raju an opportunity to please her by providing her what the husband had never given her. He took her all over Malgudi for outing, shopping, dining in the hotel, seeing a cinema. Naturally she enjoyed too much; she was 'excited, thrilled, appreciative of everything'. 'This was probably the first time she was seeing the world. She was in ecstasies... Her eyes sparkled with vivacity and gratitude'(87-88). They were entangled in an illicit relationship. For Raju: "The only reality in my life

and consciousness was Rosie”(118).After the first flush of eroticism was over, Rosie became morose. She was pricked by her conscience in her relationship with Raju and, again, she could not be happy with her husband who was busy with the cold, old stone walls of the caves and could not satisfy her. Actually she ‘herself was a dreamer if ever there was one. She would have greatly benefited by a husband who could care for her career...’ (113). On her slightest mention he promised her the greatest service he could render. He helped her to day-dream. He ‘found out the clue to her affection and utilized it to the utmost’(122).It was for his promise to fulfill her dream that Rosie returned to Raju after Marco had left her. But though in the hotel room once Rosie appeared to be an abstraction in her absolute identification with art, more often than not what he watched of her dance during practice in the mud house of theirs were the curves that tempted him to hug her(163).Whenever he watched her sway her figure, he wanted to interrupt her. The commercial prospect of her dance was, however, in his head. He thought of her as a ‘gold-mine’ and Bharat Natyam as the greatest art business of the time(162) However, on Rosie’s persistent demands he desperately hunted for a lucky break. Once he could introduce Rosie on stage, rocket-like she soared. Now money poured in; Raju was now ensnared by *artha*. He utilized the opportunity to make money. Affluence led to luxury. They had a stylish two-storied house at New Extension and a car in keeping with the status of a celebrity. The house had a large compound, lawns, a garden and a garage. He engaged five musicians, a dance-master, a large staff of servants- a driver for the car, two gardeners for the garden, a Gurkha centry at the gate with a dagger at his waist, and two cooks. People came to see Raju by appointment. He jealously protected Rosie - his property: “I had a monopoly of her and nobody had anything to do with her” Fame brought money and power. “...my friendship was now sought after by others. I was on back-slapping term with two judges, four eminent politicians of the district whose ward could bring ten thousand votes at any moment for any cause, and two big textile-mill owners, a banker, a municipal councilor, and the editor of *The Truth, a weekly...*” (189). He liked to ‘hobnob’ with them and offered them coffee ‘because they were men of money or influence(189). He spent an enormous amount on servants and style. Coffee bill in their house amounted to three hundred rupees which was sufficient to maintain a middle class family in comfort. When Rosie expressed her fatigue with the same routine life, yearned for some relaxation, wondered about the use of so much of money, Raju thought differently: “It seemed absurd that we should earn less than the maximum we could manage...We needed all the money in the world. If I were less prosperous, who would care for me?”(195) He also planned big investments.

The image of egotistic Raju posing as an impresario is built up over a good many pages. In every show he occupied the middle sofa in the first row. He ‘gave it out that...unless [he]...sat there Nalini would be unable to perform’ (182). Again, “No show started until I nodded to the man peeping from the wings, and then the curtain went up. I never gave the signal until I satisfied myself that everything was set” (183). He mock-seriously enquired of the lighting, microphone arrangements and looked about as if to calculate ‘the velocity of the air, the strength of the ceiling’ and to consider ‘if the pillars would support the roof under the circumstances’ (183). By all these false postures he ‘created a tenseness’ for the organizers who at the

beginning of the performance heaved a sigh of relief for they had 'achieved a difficult object' and Raju thought that it would help Nalini's career. He paid little attention to the crowd of visitors on the outer veranda of their stylish new house waiting all day to have a chance to speak to him: "Sometimes I observed through the glass window in the hall, how big a crowd waited for me outside, and I made a strategic exit through a side door ...while the visitors looked on helplessly. I felt vastly superior to everyone"(188). He recollects his receiving the higher grade of visitors in the hall and his feeling of self-importance and power: "Sitting in that hall and looking around I had the satisfaction of feeling that I had arrived" (188). He 'hugged a glass of whisky for hours'(196) to be an image of a man of influence –a 'permit-holder'. Though prohibition law was in force for drinking in public, it was not for a man of influence of his stature. His power and influence gave him access to 'what was going on behind the scenes in government, at the market, at Delhi, on the race course, and who was going to be who in the coming week'(196). He could 'get a train reservation at a moment's notice, relieve a man summoned to jury work... reinstate a dismissed official, get a man employed...and get an unpopular official shifted elsewhere...'(196). Intoxicated with such power he could not allow Rosie to slip away from him as she was the source of his power. This is why he did not let Rosie know about the magnanimity of Marco in sending him a copy of his epoch-making book with an acknowledgement of Raju's services and more so in his sending the lawyer's letter for releasing the jewellery box; as he was always anxious that she might change her mind and even return to her husband. Again, his blind pursuit of *artha* tempted him to forge her signature.

Raju in his urge for gaining self-importance is tempted to drift into the role of a swami at the very beginning. He can not ignore the respectful gaze of Velan. 'The old habit of affording guidance to others' asserted. "Ever since the moment this man had come and sat before him, gazing on his face, he had experienced a feeling of importance. He felt like an actor who was always expected to utter the right sentence" (14). Raju nodding his head in 'a sudden access of pontificality', narrating the story of great Buddha or Raju offering the basket of edibles at the feet of the image in the ancient shrine and narrating the story of Devaka are the images of a 'master of the situation' - a fraud asserting his self-importance by posing as a great soul enlightening an inquiring mind. Starts another very dangerous act of posing as a guide on the part of Raju. Besides, his past haunts him; he cannot escape elsewhere. He can also utilize the opportunity to collect food for survival. What Raju does is only to utter some philosophic generalizations or platitudes or mystify his statements. He drags the innocent people 'deeper and deeper into the bog of unclear thoughts'(52). His thirst for eminence makes him play the role he is put to or he himself opts for, with utmost of enthusiasm after he shakes the initial vacillation. "He decided to look as brilliant as he could manage, let drop gems of thought from his lip, assume all the radiance available, and afford them all the guidance they required without stint"(33-34). The omniscient narrator's mocking tone steeped in irony runs ceaselessly: "He was surprised at the amount of wisdom welling from the depths of his being...He was hypnotized by his own voice; he felt himself growing in stature as he saw the upturned faces of the children shining in the half-light when he spoke. No one was more impressed with the grandeur of the whole thing than Raju

himself”(47). As adulation grows, he grows a beard to strike thoughtfully which would suit his spiritual status. When Raju’s two selves - the public and the private come to clash, “his tone hushed with real humility and fear; his manner was earnest”(109). The language loses its comic ironic edge. Thinking first of flying he is then ‘moved by the recollection of the big crowd of women and children touching his feet’(111). But the clash goes on. Raju takes meals without anybody’s knowledge. His confession brings Velan (as well the readers) to his true self. But the credulous disciple refuses to shake off his faith. He takes him to be another Valmiki – sinner-turned-saint. Raju finds no way to escape from the position to which he has carried himself day by day. He has to undertake the fast to appease rain god. On the second day of his fast he has no food to eat; but his private self hankers for it. He desperately sneaks in the temple to find if any bit of food is there, but in vain. He glares at Velan who has jeopardized his position and has had morbid and fantastic thoughts. At last the sight of Velan who has undertaken a sympathetic fast and is straining to give him as much comfort as possible to make the fast a success, makes him think of doing something seriously. He is dissatisfied with ‘persistence of food thoughts’. His *bhogi* self tries again and again to evade the ordeal; but he has to act under compulsion. There is the risk of being caught on the way if he tries to escape; there is the devotion of so many people – their expectation. “With a sort of vindictive resolution he told himself, “I’ll chase away all thought of food. For the next ten days I shall eradicate all thoughts of tongue and stomach from my mind”(237). In desperation he thinks: ‘If by avoiding food I should help the trees bloom, and the grass grow, why not do it thoroughly?’ (237)Even after ‘making an earnest effort’ for the first time, ‘learning the thrill of full application, outside money and love’ for the first time, ‘doing a thing in which he was not personally interested’ there is ambivalence in the novelist’s attitude towards the saint. He tells us that even on the fourth day the *swami* can make out the meaning of the smoke on the river bank. He even wonders what they may be eating. The sight torments him(234). Irony is not done with even in the interview with the American reporter. On the question “Er—for instance, have you always been a Yogi?” the *swami*’s answer is: ‘Yes; more or less.’ Here is the implication that Raju as all through his life now also tries the option available and carries on with it ‘with relish and perfection’(Mukherjee 124).

The irony of the situation where a *bhogi* has turned into a *yogi* is accompanied by the irony in the images of self gratification on the river bank. The people coming to have a *darshan* of the *Swami* are engrossed in enjoyment of the funs of a picnic. Raju may discard his role of a *bhogi* denying the enjoyment of the pleasures of the senses, the sight-seeing public in festive dresses can not allow the opportunity of enjoying themselves slip away. Shops have sprung up displaying coloured soda bottles and bunches of bananas and coconut toffees. Tea Propaganda Board, pasting its posters all around the temple wall, also intends to utilize the opportunity to popularize the drinking of tea by serving free tea. The American reporter is engaged in a ridiculous interview to commodify the *Swami*’s fast as an Indian exotic show piece. This man represents media from the First World asserting himself in the affairs of the place. “He pushed everything aside and took charge of

the scene. He looked about for only a moment, driving his jeep down to the hibiscus bush behind the temple. He jumped off and strode past everyone to the pillared hall”(242). The throbbing of his generator ‘filled the place, overwhelming all other noises’(243). “It brought in a huge crowd of men, women, and children to watch the fun. All the other attractions in the camp became secondary”(243). The solemnity in the transformation of Raju is juxtaposed by the ridiculous extreme in the scene of the crowd of people fond of fun and sensation. “They climbed pillars and pedestals and clung to all sorts of places to reach positions of vantage”(243). Narayan has had dig at Government of India which has seized on the occasion to address the huge gathering to show their health consciousness documentaries, to publicize government development projects. They play popular hits on the gramophone to attract audience. Newspaper reporters have rushed to make hot news of the place which was totally neglected in spite of being drought-stricken until the startling news of the fast catches their attention. These people have no concern for the risk the Swami has braved. They are just the ploughman or the ship turning away from Icarus ‘disappearing into the green water’.

Raju may find his *moksha* personally in taking the fast seriously; but can it exert any influence on the lives of the thousands and millions of Indian people? Velan and some of his companions may be sympathetic and respectful for the Swami as they took him to be so from the moment they saw him or rather made him so themselves and the drought touched them closely. But for the others? They haven’t a mind to brood over the significance of the Swami’s fast; it is just an occasion for merrymaking. Narayan’s tone is quite ironic until only a few lines before the end of the novel. Even ‘the profoundest silence’ at the last moment may be interpreted as the silence of the tensed moments of the final over of a cricket match only to wait to see whether the Swami would succeed in bringing rains by his fast or not.

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**Responses to India- Naipaul, N.C.Chaudhuri, Rushdie and
R.K.Narayan :A Comparative Study
Aloy Chand Biswas**

Patrick French, Naipaul's authorized biographer wrote his voluminous biography of Naipaul under a deceptive but appropriate title, suggested by Naipaul himself – *The World As It Is*. Patrick refers to his author's cardinal honesty as a man as well as a writer who does not wish to suppress anything in his life, because he believes - the world cannot be changed to any different form from what it is. It is his adopted principle of writing for himself, no external substitute like an outrage against realities of life. He is not a writer of Rushdie's élan of fact- fictionalizing trend. Fact is itself fictive if one cares to look it. Naipaul does so and his nascent fiction on the converted areas of Islam is as much so as on Indians living anywhere inside and outside India. So he could write his *The Mimic Men* and quote it in his Nobel Lecture. "The book was called *The Mimic Men*. And it was not about mimics. It was about colonial men mimicking the conditions of manhood, men who had grown to distrust everything about themselves" ('Two Worlds', *The Nobel Lecture*). His latest work *A Masque of Africa: Glimpses of African Belief* is the presentation of such a world painted with a stroke of humour, which may pass over ordinary readers' heads, but cannot escape the eye of a critic.

Salman Rushdie presents Indians who are an amusing miscarriage. He is a story-teller of Arabian Nights – order basically in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. He is more so in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. Naipaul cannot write one so. His direction is different. To him every life is a story *per se* and he is inside that story, "I am the sum of my books" ('Two Worlds', *The Nobel Lecture*). He does not need to build it. Actually Naipaul is an Indian by birth and Rushdie is an Indian who knows India more than Naipaul does. When both of them are compared with N. C. Chaudhuri, the difference is striking. N. C. Chaudhuri is a man born and raised initially on the soft soil of the eastern part of riparian Bengal armed with a keen eye and a critical mind. All that he sees and knows – a good lot of India in relation to the west and all the strata of her political and cultural history and he brings them to bear upon a consolidated criticism in the whole series of his writings in Bengali and English. The writings are virtually a long string of autobiographical responses from beginning to end reared up by his unmoved personality. Chaudhuri is never a sharing shadow, never like Rushdie lost in his tales, never like Naipaul merging in *A way in the World*. He is ever consciously himself. His life is a continued judgment which Naipaul cannot be when he cherishes a sense of belongingness in a world which is what it is. He feels no use of refusing to be what he is. That is mainly why he resents those trying to be otherwise than what they are. Chaudhuri cannot allow them to betray the standard truth. Again Chaudhuri's sense of humour is saddled too heavy to move about free. Judgement even trots his pace. *Thy Hand, Great Anarch!* is that book in which India is not in his cavalcade, neither a close follower in

an easy centre. On the otherhand Naipaul has no Canterbury in view, if he accompanies the pilgrims, he is not for a pilgrimage. Aziz accompanies him to the shrine on the hills of Northern India as a Muslim guide to a Hindu. When Naipaul could not keep himself steady in the vigorously eager onward thrust of pilgrims and fell back, his Muslim guide Aziz became mixed among the Hindu devotees, as if one of them, too eager to be graced by the sight of the Hindu god, the holy Lingam. Naipaul enjoyed it no less as did his guide.

When compared to Rushdie's lingam-worship in *Grimus*, it is a pilgrimage of different kind, meticulously made-up as an invented story. Characters are weird in their existence and participation and the world itself is eerie, though basically true. If Naipaul's is fact-fiction, Rushdie's is fiction-fact. Rushdie's India in *Midnight's Children* is pain in fact, but pleasure in fiction. The glorious moment of birth for the Nation as well as for all the children is a stark irony made amusingly fictional in form – Shiva-Shaleem swapped at birth, Parvati and Shiva proving a total mismatch, yet Shaleem appearing none-the-less in-between. India swapped at birth is a myth fictive as well as factitious. Naipaul's art is deceptively elusive, yet it is as much as life is. Artless art is life which is Naipaul's too. Therefore

Aziz-Naipaul pilgrimage is a naked humour which is deceptive to that extent. True humour is truth revealed with an amusing subtlety of touches. It provides enjoyment not as a hilarious exuberance, but as enlightenment. Life itself is a great ground to Naipaul, therefore he does not require Rushdian myth of a satiric impatience and agony of child-birth just at the time of India's wounded independence. Naipaul accounts for a 'civilization wounded' which does not require a myth, as his *An Area of Darkness* also does not, for darkness itself explains it. Naipaul's art so to be called is not adopted, but self-evolved out of an urge that gave it a direction and defined its verve. Therefore Naipaul depicts India as 'an area of darkness', 'a civilization wounded' and also 'a million mutinies now', in a quite different way from what Chaudhuri presents and Rushdie rears up in so many stories he builds up with.

Naipaul's is apparently a traveller's enquiring eye, a perceptive mind and finally with an amused interest in life around him. When it is India and Indians in their homeland and outside, it is more beguiling himself as an Indian outlandishly misplaced, a sort of diaspora-victim. In case of Nirad C. Chaudhuri it is never so, neither he is a fiction writer. He is a willing denizen of a city of England. India appeared to him poorly equipped to govern herself. He preferred for them a supervising rule with limited power of self-government. He has no amusing Indian story to sell. India is his land of Circe. He is not ready to revise his impression as was Naipaul on his subsequent visits to India. Naipaul came to India to be acquainted with his roots and his mood was nostalgic. Chaudhuri had no such reason to lend enchantment to the view. He had no illusion, so had no reason to be disillusioned. Chaudhuri had personal contact with Naipaul. He enjoyed a day's hospitality at Naipaul's residence, even in his absence. Patricia, his hostess paid no less care to her guest. No such close relationship Rushdie enjoyed with them. Their social affiliations are different and styles of writing are also different. The only common bond was India, though different in their responses to it. Chaudhuri's is a benevolent critic's role, whereas the other two are creatively poised. Rushdie's Haroun's father Rashid and Naipaul's Willie Chandran are two different creations. Willie's Ana is a close parallel to Naipaul's Pat with their similar rootless position –

Willie directly from India, Naipaul from Trinidad Indians. Naipaul knew the style how to use the Indian rootlessness to a fascinating story, all real yet no less a story. This knowledge is out of an intense interest in how life is lived. He does not need criticism, for criticism is inherent in life itself. For Rushdie also, he cannot spoil the spell of his stories. It is he who only can show – a baby born Muslim swapped with one from Hindu passes well as good a Hindu as the other no less a Muslim. The irony is that yet India was partitioned on the basis of Hindu – Muslim nation theory. Rushdie's is a satire too rollicking for those who were meant to be hurt. But he never means to hurt anybody. This is purely art.

Chaudhuri's is history, but Naipaul's is life. When it is India – specific, they two are co-linear in approach, one abreast with history, the other with the life he knows along with what it reveals. Naipaul withholds criticism, Chaudhuri cannot. Chaudhuri's judgement is individualistic and uncompromising, exactly not of order of Naipaul's 'the world as it is'. Chaudhuri's 'Civis Britannicus Sum' which he produced in the dedication part of *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* is a committed pledge, an echo of Roman history. Naipaul has no such commitment. He remains a rootless Indian. The vacuum Pat's death created was filled up by a lady from the sub-continent. His wish to settle in India was frustrated. He was led by his human urge, diaspora which is also a human problem. Naipaul could never write a chapter 'My Faith in Empires', as it happens to Chaudhuri in *Thy Hand, Great Anarch!*. He wrote there : "..... I might say that to speak in favour of empires, including the British Empire in India in the 1980s, and living in England, would be like being a Lutheran in Old Spain with its Inquisition" (773). Naipaul's is a realistic view. His history is confined to that extent as India appears to him 'a wounded civilization'. Chaudhuri's history records the rot which requires an Imperial expert to attend to heal. But what Naipaul means is that India's wound is received as a weakling's due and the weakening happens due to a long-drawn malnourishment. This sight is perhaps lost of Chaudhuri's keen-eyed concentration. Chaudhuri was moved to passion at the sight of debris of Delhi- Tuglakabad, but he left out. He never felt for Vijayanagar and the last Mughal Bahadur Shah's poem written in the last phase of Sepoy Mutiny, immediately before his captivity. He never felt curious about what the last Mughal wrote in it, as Naipaul did. Chaudhuri's eulogy for empire is unqualified, where Naipaul's is never. Howard Russell's Mutiny memoir for once rouses Naipaul :

It feels me with old nerves to contemplate Indian history, to see (perhaps with a degressive's exaggeration, or a far-away colonial's exaggeration) how close we were to cultural destitution, and to wonder at the many accidents which brought us to the concepts of law and freedom and wide human association – which gave men self-awareness and strength....." (*India : A Million Mutinies Now* 98).

This sharing of India's destiny is rare in Chaudhuri's writings. Rather he is on the side of Empire as revealed in *The Continent of Circe*. His personal letter dated 11 Feb. 1946 to a London Daily 'The Daily Telegraph' is not what an Indian should have written :

But the people of India, if one considers their typical behaviours, do not act in this fashion. They are capable of creating and nursing grievances and drawing satisfaction from self-pity..... (*Thy Hand, Great Anarch!* 802).

Naipaul was never an Indian citizen. He came to India in 1962 to be acquainted with his roots. While paying a visit to the Dubey's village, though he came from a different world, yet he found something common with them. He found Yassodhara a fair link between Trinidad and Dubey's village – language almost the same, hospitality of the same awkward kind. Then women cared less for his glory, rather more for their kinship with his parents. Naipaul also did not feel ashamed of acknowledging them as his kins. Chaudhuri too did not fail to respond to the old neglected beauty on his Banaras- visit of the Buddhist sculpture of bygone age at Saranath.

Naipaul's response is a kind of root-seeking and quite different from Chaudhuri's approach. Root is not Chaudhuri's concern, for he is not rootless. Chaudhuri's so much insistence on history is given an egotistic glamour of infallible truth that there is hardly any scope for an amusing relaxation of humour except for a frisking of facts. A passage is here from *Thy Hand, Great Anarch!* to witness :

Working everyday from the beginning of May, I had finished Chapter –2 of the second part of my autobiography (P.217 of the 1951 American edition), when my writing was interrupted by sudden outbreak of violence in Delhi in Sept. 1947. (837).

Naipaul's mood is relaxed observation and his response is not critical reaction, rather enjoyment in intimations. India revealed herself to him at the moment he saw her. He clearly admits that he had seen India in her Trinidad version, then saw her at home and further beyond. Chaudhuri's position is different. He is an insider, born Indian and brought up too. His deep interest in history, armed with major Indian languages like Sanskrit and Bengali, could make his access easy to pre-10th century history of India and need not have been obsessively confined to India's subjection to Empire. Why he did not do, it is difficult to understand, though an autobiographical interest prevails over all his writings and it sometimes appears egotistic in nature. Naipaul avoids Chaudhuri's quibbling, as for example he calls Gandhiji India's God, but Chaudhuri presents him :

this homage is sub-rational, but it is respectable and, therefore, might be called supra-rational. To the masses of India, the actual is always crushing and frightening, and so, all their idealism and yearning for happiness find refuge in myths. There will be no time in the future history of the Hindus in which Mahatma Gandhi will not be remembered in this way. He has taken his place in our Pantheon. (*Thy Hand, Great Anarch!* 876)

Rushdie's is neither direct nor quibbling, and adds a rider : but satiric as in his *The Moor's Last Sigh*. He quotes a passage from R. K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma*:

Then Gandhi came and made everyone clap hands in rhythm over their heads and chant his favourite dhun:And there was *Jai Krishna, Hare Krishna, Jai Govind, Hare Govind*, there was *Samb Sadashiv Samb Sadashiv Samb Sadashiv Samb Shiva Har Har Har Har...*(*The Moor's Last Sigh* 55).

What happened thereafter Rushdie ridicules the message the Mahatma carried to the people in such a language:

'After all that' Camoens told Belle on his return, 'I heard nothing. I had seen India's beauty in that crowd with its soda-water and cucumber but with that God stuff I got scared. In the city we are for secular India, but the village is for Ram....In the end I am afraid the villagers will march on the cities and people like us will have to lock our doors and there will come a Battering Ram' (ibid 55-56).

The fiction-writer Rushdie is a discord in criticism more than Chaudhuri's personal criticism of Mahatma-led India. The three great writers of Indian blood took up India as their subject. It was quite natural that they knew India more than anything else, but their involvement with India is varied in degrees as well as in kinds. Chaudhuri lived in India for nearly seventy years and the other two live outside India among the Indians sometimes directly sometimes indirectly. Naipaul's birth among indentured Trinidad Indians caste in his mind a strong West Indian impact. Rushdie's high middle class family fell direct victim to the partition. Therefore different kinds of Indian life lived by the three writers directly or indirectly regulated their approach to India.

Naipaul's is not Chaudhuri's kind of mind. His is an artist's criticism building up from his love for art. He avoids directness and his art intervenes to make everything emanate to the point of revelation. His humour is also a forte in artistic revelation. Naipaul wins as his Willie won Ana in *Half a Life*. Ana wrote how Willie's book won her :

At school we were told that it was important to read, but it is not easy for people of my background and I suppose yours to find books where we can see ourselves. I feel I had to write to you because in your stories for the first time I find moments that are like moments in my own life, though the background and material are so different. It does my heart a lot of good to think that out there all these years there was someone thinking and feeling like me. (*Half a Life* 124)

Naipaul won people who saw themselves in his books and shared a lot with him. Chaudhuri perhaps missed that chance. He could hardly get anybody to share his points of view. His egotistic style of presentation repulsed that last chance in India. Of these three writers on India, Chaudhuri knew more about India. For he mostly lived among the Indians, reacted and responded too. He spent half of his life in Bengal, yet he never felt at ease with the Bengalees. His shift from Kolkata to Delhi made to major change in his attitude to India. India's Independence never gave him personal freedom for judgement. Therefore he remained a Catholic Pope so to speak in a Protestant land. Though Pope's unsavoury satires made his people relish his literary works, Chaudhuri's unsparing judgement could hardly make him enjoyable to his countrymen. His *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* becomes a subject of strong criticism even among the Indians.

Naipaul and Rushdie are also autobiographical – Rushdie is a Partition-victim and Naipaul being ill-fatedly a West Indian. Any Indian living anywhere made Naipaul feel a bond of kingship, a healthy human limitation. It is their art that wins the readers' hearts, yet leaves them free to detect. If it is judgement, willing

acceptance is to be awaited and cannot be enforced. Chaudhuri's *Autobiography* is more an intellectual focus on life around, a judgement uncompromisingly compact. So, his old teacher Mohit Mazumdar who was his literary mentor assured Chaudhuri to send his critical assessment later –“But I have other anxieties besides the book and that is about your personal welfare or harm” (*Thy Hand, Great Anarch!* 911). Naipaul is not so worried about India. He is impressed by Aziz's second generation, Nazir, an eighteen-year boy of good looks and a broader view of life. Again Naipaul's views on 'a million mutinies' in India form a stable India in future.

Rushdie does not require such an extended hope for India. To him India is a land of stories. India breaks or builds no matter, it supplies materials for his stories all the same. Like Haroun's father Rashid he cares less of who wins the election and who does not, he wants only his audience, all electors to be amused. This is here to explain itself :

Whenever Rashid was talking about Khattam-Shud and his henchmen from the Union of the zipped Lips, the whole audience stared very hard at Snooty Buttoo and his henchmen who were sitting behind Rashid on the stage.....” (*Haroun and the Sea of Stories* 206).

Chaudhuri discards any literary form. Autobiography too is not so much a form to him. Biography presented by him is an image of Bengal, then of India and the subject offers an uninspiring show that calls for a stand-by mentor's care. Judgement in objective form is a sort of egotistic approach and style of presentation does not help any symbiosis. Naipaul's is not an altruistic image of India. Indians in India and abroad, in different settings, are varied almost in everything to Naipaul. But on one point, a sluggish neighbourliness among themselves, not too close, not too remote on the basis of caste or sect becomes always visible to him –“...they developed something they would never have known in India: a sense of belonging to an Indian community” (Naipaul, *India: A Million Mutinies* Now 7). Identity can be easily ascertained. For Naipaul identity is very important. The El Dorado to the European adventurers is a loss because it is misconceived. But to Naipaul it cannot be, because it is not an adventurer's romantic fancy forming an unreality. It is a creator's sure find, if not a mound of gold, at least a fertile field for a creator's crop. *Miguel Street* is his first harvest and Hat himself is the reminder of an obscurity, though he can be a cause of worry of a remote European rule, as early as 1625 AD. Naipaul's is actually a fictional reconstruction of India. Nowhere his judgement is permitted to becloud his sense of story. All his characters are individuals and his power of observation awakens in him an amused interest, as it may call for a similar interest in readership. Rushdie is more on the side of enjoyment. His 'Nishapur' in *Shame* was built up for protection from outside sins, but sin inside proliferated more horribly than it could without such a meticulous care to prevent contamination. Aristotelian concept of tragedy yields place to Arabian Night's dragons and devils to engross another interest which stories serve by their accepted unrealities. Rushdie's India, divided or undivided – presents jocular inhumanity for surpassing heroic blood game of Medieval Tournament and Spanish Bull-fight in the West. He only upholds the eastern standard.

R. K. Narayan who assured Naipaul ‘India will go on’ (Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness* 232) is the one writer who evoked India which Graham Greene hailed as his ‘second home’ just in this word :

There are writers – Tolstoy and Henry James to name two – whom we hold in awe, writers – Turgenev and Chekhov – for whom we feel personal affections, other writers whom we respect – Conrad for example – but who hold us at a long arm’s length with their ‘courtly foreign grace’, Narayan (whom I don’t hesitate to name in such a context) more than any of them wakes in me a spring of gratitude; for he has offered me a second home. Without him I could never have known what it is like to be Indian (Back cover page of *Mr. Sampath*).

Like Hardy, Narayan is a regional novelist. Malgudi, though a fictional city, represents an area in the Southern part of India. Metaphorically Sampath is Nataraja’s cousin quizzically frauding everybody for a living. Only Srinivas a sober Indian penman, perhaps Narayan’s closest personal representation of an honest Indian and Shanti, and ideal beauty, Ravi’s ideal love making him a true artist project an India that provided space enough for a Hollywood of Indian kind and all fracas in its rehearsal trail. Naipaul could not write it. His is India visited, even re-visited, a nostalgia never leaving him, yet ever remaining slipping out of his hold. Graham Greene’s simulated ‘second home’ is not his, neither his is Narayan’s ‘home’. It persists still as Naipaul’s nostalgia.

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Tuberculosis and Nineteenth Century Literature: Aestheticization of the Malady as a ‘Romantic Disease’

Arup Ratan Chakraborty

I

Within the history of literature no other disease is as complex and enigmatic as tuberculosis. Tuberculosis stands unique within the realm of literature against other diseases due mainly to its commonality: the disease was one of the most prolific killers of human beings all over the globe. Tuberculosis, for a very brief time in history, became a symbol for a tragic beauty that marked the social structure and literature, art and theatre of the day. Although the disease was most virulent and potent killer that transcended all races and nations, suffering from tuberculosis was thought to bestow upon the sufferer a heightened sensitivity. The Romantics, especially, embodied this disease, which shaped many of the classic works of the period. ‘Consumption’, ‘phthisis’, ‘scrofula’, ‘Pott’s disease’, and the ‘White Plague’ are all terms used to refer to tuberculosis throughout history. It is estimated that it reached its peak between the end of the 18th century and the end of the 19th century. Its high mortality rate among middle-aged adults and the surge Romanticism, which stressed feeling over reason, caused many to refer to the disease as the ‘romantic disease’. This paper argues how tuberculosis came to be known as the glamorous and artistic Romantic malady. The slow progress of the disease allowed for a peaceful death as the sufferers could arrange the remaining journey of their life. The disease began to represent spiritual purity and temporal wealth, leading many young, upper-class women to purposefully pale their skin to achieve the consumptive appearance. British poet Lord Byron wrote, “I should like to die of a consumption”– “Why?”– “Because the ladies would all say, ‘Look at that poor Byron, how interesting he looks in dying” (204), helping to glorify the disease as the disease of artists. Even after medical knowledge of the disease had accumulated, the redemptive-spiritual perspective of the disease continued in literature.

In literature, as well as life, tuberculosis became more than just a disease: it became an art. In his 1966 article “Tuberculosis and the Creative Writer” John Wilson argues that “all art is forged out of human experience, and pulmonary tuberculosis is one of the deepest and most testing experiences that a man [or woman] can undergo” (161). Though the disease was extremely destructive and painful there emerged in both literature and contemporary medical discourse a belief that the disease could cause one to possess special creative qualities. By the early Eighteenth Century there also existed “alongside the horrible pathology... a tradition of the art of living well with, and dying a good death from, consumption” (Lawlor and Suzuki 463). As the Eighteenth century progressed, having tuberculosis and being treated for the disease became “an experience associated with refined cultural values and aesthetic pleasures” (475). The Nineteenth Century “developed and transformed, rather than denied, the culture of aestheticized consumption” that developed in the previous

century (462).

II

Katherine Byrne's new book *Tuberculosis and the Victorian Literary Imagination* is a welcome addition to the recent medical humanities scholarship on the interrelationship between literature and medicine in nineteenth-century Britain. It furthers recent study on the interrelationship between tuberculosis and literature in the work of, for example, Clark Lawlor's *Consumption and Literature: The Making of the Romantic Disease* (Palgrave, 2006). Byrne's well-researched book provides an impressive array of historical sources on tuberculosis, rescued from the annals of time, and makes interesting and important cultural connections between Victorian medical knowledge and trends in nineteenth-century fiction. In her book, Katherine Byrne describes the numerous subject types that tuberculosis became associated with in literature:

[Tuberculosis] has been associated simultaneously, though not always congruously, with youth and purity, with genius, with heightened sensibility and with increased sexual appetites. The resulting images have become famous textual tropes: the languishing consumptive poet whose thwarted desires and personal frustrations seem to have brought about his illness; the Christlike [sic] innocence of the child who dies because they are too pure for the world; the beautiful but wan and pining girl whose decline owes much to her broken heart... (Byrne 3)

Many of these literary tropes existed in literature long before the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries. Consumption was considered closely linked to one's emotions, particularly love and desire. As Susan Sontag explains in her essay "Illness as Metaphor", the fever associated with tuberculosis was a sign of "inward burning," and someone with tuberculosis was 'consumed' by ardour...leading to the dissolution of the body" (20). Metaphors taken from tuberculosis "to describe love" were the "the image[s] of a diseased love...long antedates the Romantic movement. Starting with the Romantics, the image was inverted, and TB was conceived as a variant of the disease of love" (Sontag 20).

The literary portrayal of tuberculosis in the nineteenth century contrasts with the scientific reality of the disease with the oft-romanticized portrayal in fiction. An examination of a selection of the major works of John Keats, Edgar Allan Poe, Charlotte Brontë and Fyodor Dostoevsky reveals that these writers had firsthand experience with tuberculosis – they either suffered from the disease themselves or were surrounded by those who did. Tuberculosis and the aestheticization of the disease play a major role in many of their works. Instead of acute terror, in many observers and victims of the fatal disease the attitude was one of lofty melancholy. Rene Dubos, a French-born physician and author of many scientific books and essays, observed that to be consumptive was almost a mark of distinction, and the pallor caused by the disease was part of the standard of beauty.

III

As René and Jean Dubos point out in their classic 1952 study *The White Plague Tuberculosis, Man and Society*, “all of the tragedy of consumption, the perverted attitude of the romantic era toward the disease and the ignorance of Nineteenth Century medicine...are exemplified in the story of John Keats” (11). In fact, according to Clark Lawlor the entirety of “Masculine consumptive mythology centres [sic] around Keats as the primary symbolic figure of the consumptive poet” (9). A gifted and talented poet, he died at the age of twenty five from the same disease which had claimed his mother and three brothers. His association with the disease was present in many of his works, which swell heavily on the theme of life “as a tangle of inseparable but irreconcilable opposites” (Abrams 95). These opposites, such as love and cruelty, pervade his poetry and show an irresistible beauty found in the life cut short and the early death of a loved one. It is this view that begins to explain the positive Romantic metaphors given to ‘consumption’.

Keats’s experience with his illness had a profound effect on his writings – many of his poems have reference to death or dying young. Each of Keats’s odes, including “On a Grecian Urn,” “On Melancholy,” and “Ode to a Nightingale,” are, according to John Evangelist Walsh, a “muffled cry from the very depths of the heart over what appears the cruel transience and shortness of life, and the heartbreak of its close” (36). Written in 1819, “Ode to a Nightingale” contains some of Keats’s most poignant allusions to death – the first half of the ode is comprises the poet’s desire “to escape the self and its human condition” (Sheats 91). The world of “weariness, the fever and the fret,” where “but to think is to be full of sorrow / And leaded eyed despairs” is far too overwhelming for the narrator. He tells the nightingale that he will fly to it – however, as Paul D. Sheats points out, this “imaginative union with the bird already portends the self- annihilation that becomes temptingly explicit in stanza six” (90-91). In Stanza VI the narrator conceives of death as an “eternal present” and the “prolongation of the ecstatic moment” (Sperry265):

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call’d him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy! (Norton 904)

Although “Ode to a Nightingale” makes no explicit reference to tuberculosis, critics believe that the line from Stanza III “where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies” is a direct reference to the death of Keats’s brother, Tom (Lawlor 112). The description of youth growing “pale...spectre thin” and then dying can easily be read as a reference to the wasting symptoms of tuberculosis.

In “Ode on Melancholy,” which is probably Keats’s best known statement of his recurrent theme of the mingled contraries of life, he implies that it is the tragic human destiny that beauty, joy, and life itself owe not only their quality but their

value to the fact that they are transitory and turn into their opposites. He clearly shows these opposites of beauty mingled with pain:

Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
Or on the wealth of globed peonies;
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.
She dwells with Beauty--Beauty that must die;
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips.... (Norton 907)

This poem embodies this English Romantic view that permeated the very definition of 'consumption'; in this horrible disease, there is a mutability that Keats had witnessed first-hand in his own life with the death of his mother and three brothers, and then with his own illness. However, even in a horrible, ugly death, there is a beauty to be found.

Within Nineteenth Century American literature, no writer is as dark, enigmatic, or as tragic as Edgar Allan Poe. Poe's life was a rather depressing record of poverty and loss, and his life greatly influenced his writing. He often wrote of idyllic love that ultimately ends in death, as "the death and loss of the woman he loved was one of the most constant factors in Poe's life" (Galloway 33). One of the major influences in Poe's life was the prolonged illness and eventual death of his wife, Virginia Clemm, from tuberculosis. Poe was, by all accounts, devoted to Virginia, and her illness influenced his moods and his ability to write.

In his works, Poe portrays consumption as "the disease of an easy and beautiful death. In the Romantic formulation, consumption was aestheticised in a positive manner as a sign of passion, spirituality and genius" (Lawlor 1-2). Poe may have witnessed first-hand his wife's slow and terrible decline, but "unique as he was in so many ways, Poe was close to cultural norms in his attitude to consumption" (3). One of the most extreme examples of Poe's romanticization of tuberculosis lies in a single paragraph in one of his first short-stories, "Metzengerstein," a story in which the young Baron Fredrick's mother, Lady Mary, dies of consumption. The narrator describes the disease as 'gentle,' where the end is neither painful nor gross, but 'glorious'. The narrator even breaks away from the story and wishes all those he loves would die of consumption:

The beautiful Lady Mary! How could she die? – and of consumption! But it is a path I have prayed to follow. I would wish all I love to perish of that gentle disease. How glorious! To depart in the hey-day of the young blood – the heart all passion – the imagination all fire – amid the remembrances of happier days – in the fall of the year – and so be buried up forever in the gorgeous autumnal leaves! Thus died the Lady Mary. (Poe 97)

The mention of the "gorgeous autumnal leaves" in the paragraph about Lady Mary solidifies the romantic image of consumption: "autumn was traditionally the time for consumptive death but also the most visually poetic of seasons" (Lawlor 2). The image of falling leaves was, according to Dormandy, a metaphor in tuberculosis

literature for “failing hopes [and] the destruction of young lives” (85). Poe, like many of his contemporaries, reveled in “the terrible beauty of consumption” despite being frequently exposed to the devastating reality of the disease (93). However, “Metzengerstein” presents not a disease that is painful or terrible, but easy and painless. The consumption in “Metzengerstein” is the romantic consumption – a disease that is close to the cultural norm at the time. “Metzengerstein” and “The Masque of The Red Death” represent the two extremes of Poe’s portrayal of tuberculosis. On the one side, he presents a disease that is ‘glorious’ and ‘gentle’ and on the other the horror of the Red Death as there is no escape from it.

Like Poe, Charlotte Brontë had numerous first-hand experiences with the disease; in fact The Brontë family history with tuberculosis is one of the most tragic instances of what was, in Victorian England, called “familial phthisis”: “a terrible susceptibility to consumption (tuberculosis) seen in the members of a single family that seemed to prove that the disease or a predisposition to it was inherited” (Carpenter 55). All of the Reverend Patrick Brontë’s six children would die of consumption. Charlotte Brontë outlived each of her siblings – she died on March 31, 1855 at the age of thirty-nine.

Despite her first-hand knowledge of the disease, Charlotte Brontë’s most famous novel *Jane Eyre* features one of the archetypal consumptive characters – that of the angelic consumptive child. Helen Burns represents the archetypal tuberculous (female) child, that of the almost divine being, who is too good, too pure, too innocent, and too good for this sinful Earth. In fact, from the mid-eighteenth until the end of the Nineteenth Century “the dying tubercular maiden would be represented commonly in all media and genres as a beautiful bride of heaven, an angel too pure and spiritualized to abide long in the material world of the crude body and less-refined minds” (Lawlor and Suzuki 479). This character’s death from TB is almost never portrayed as being painful. The line between the deaths of children and young women from tuberculosis in literature is “a hazy one in this period, but the Victorians relished the uncorrupted innocence of children taken to heaven” (Lawlor 167). The character of Helen exists as a foil to the young Jane, who has a fiery, unforgiving temper, and she is not at all spiritual; when asked how she would avoid hell, Jane replies: “I must keep in good health, and not die” (Brontë 41). Helen is mild, passive, and very religious, telling Jane “...the Bible bids us return good for evil” (67) and that Jane must “observe what Christ says, and how he acts – make his word your rule, and his conduct your example” (70). Unlike Jane, Helen bears the cruel treatment she receives at Lowood School with patience and reserve, considering the punishments she receives to be just. Helen’s death is very calm and peaceful — the typical death ascribed to consumptive children. Helen is, as Katherine Bryne describes “a Christ like portrait of resigned, uncomplaining suffering, and it is notable that her death, from consumption has more meaning...than those of dozens of others who die around her in the typhoid epidemic” (16). Helen is among the numerous “angelic, too-good-to-live child heroes” common throughout Nineteenth Century literature (16).

While *Jane Eyre* was published in England in 1847, nearly twenty years later in Russia, Fyodor Dostoyevsky in *Crime and Punishment* described the polar opposite of the pure tubercular death. The death of Katerina Ivanovna’s is anything but pure or calm, nor is her disease a means of spiring her away from the sinful world. Her disease is seen, rather, as a result of the drudgery and degradation of poverty. Katerina

Ivanovna was originally born into a family of means – she is described as being “a person of education and an officer’s daughter” (16). After her husband, the drunkard Marmeladov, loses his job the family sinks into poverty, and they must live together in one tiny squalid room. As Marmeladov relates his family’s story to Raskolnikov in a bar, he says that Katerina Ivanovna’s consumption is a result of their poor living space — “we live in a cold room and she caught cold this winter and has begun coughing and spitting blood too...her chest is weak and she has a tendency to consumption” (17). When Raskolnikov meets Katerina Ivanovna she is described as:

A rather tall, slim and graceful woman, terribly emaciated, with magnificent dark brown hair and with a hectic flush in her cheeks. She was pacing up and down in her little room, pressing her hands against her chest; her lips were parched and her breathing came in nervous broken gasps. Her eyes glittered as in fever and looked about with a harsh, immovable stare. And that consumptive and excited face with the last flickering light of the candle-end playing upon it made a sickening impression. (29)

Katerina Ivanovna’s disease is neither spiritual nor glamorous, and her death is the exact opposite of the easy death experienced by the Christ-like consumptive children. Her disease is not aesthetic, nor is it intended to be seen as such. The Marmeladov family’s situation is, according to Edward Wasiolek, “a paradigm of the sentimental situation” common in Dostoevsky’s novels, but in *Crime and Punishment* this “sentimental situation takes on a new significance; it becomes a tool of moral perception n” (Wasiolek 52).

By the end of the novel, Katerina Ivanovna descends into madness. With her husband dead, and desperate for money, she sends her children out into the streets to beg. As she forces them to sing for a small crowd, making a spectacle of herself and her children, Lebeziatnikov cites consumption as a possible cause for her madness: “they say that in consumption the tubercles sometimes occur in the brain” he tells Raskolnikov (495-496). As Katerina Ivanovna chases after her children in the street she suffers a haemorrhage and is helped by Sonia and Raskolnikov into Sonia’s apartment. Once there she lapses into delirium and, eventually: “she sank back into unconsciousness again, but this time it did not last long. Her pale, yellow, wasted face dropped back, her mouth fell open, her leg moved convulsively, she gave a deep, deep sigh and died” (Dostoevsky 508).

IV

The first nail in the coffin of the notion of romantic consumption came in 1882 when German bacteriologist Robert Koch isolated and identified the causative agent of tuberculosis: the *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. Following this discovery it was proven that “tuberculosis was not hereditary as formerly believed but an infectious disease caused by the tubercle bacillus” (Bryder 3). Koch’s work “produced such a phenomenal sensation among the lay public and in medical circles that it was immediately regarded as...heralding a newer a in the study and control of disease” (Dubos and Dubos 102). Tuberculosis was, after Koch’s discovery, “no longer a vague phantom. The heretofore unseen killer was now visible as a living object and its assailants at last had a target for their blows” (102). The tuberculosis bacillus was

merely a germ which could be contracted by anyone (Lawlor 186-187). Koch's methods and findings flew in the face of traditional medicine, and his findings remained "to most practising [sic] doctors outside Mediterranean countries...a difficult concept to swallow" (Dormandy 135). Koch's findings were met with some resistance – some refused to believe Koch entirely, and set out to prove him wrong. However, these "unbelievers were fighting a losing battle" (Dormandy 136).

With the ushering in of the industrial revolution in Europe, tuberculosis reached epidemic proportions. The slums of teeming cities became cauldrons for the incubation of tuberculosis, and the disease spread like wildfire through the upper classes, rural communities and the tenements of the cities. The romantic illusion of the disease was destroyed and new metaphors replaced the old ones; metaphors of certain death, automatic transmission, and the disease as a predator and thief of life. The change from one extreme to the other is a fascination study in a societies need for meaning and blame in tragedy, and is a precursor to the many modern diseases that morph from metaphor to metaphor. A new view started to form: As the number of deaths mounted throughout the first half of the century, it became obvious that the gravity of the disease could no longer be concealed under a genteel but misleading expression.

But as the Nineteenth Century progressed into the Twentieth, the literary cult of aestheticized tuberculosis began to suffer a slow decline. By the advent of streptomycin and other antibiotics, the romantic myth of 'consumption' had vanished. Instances of the disease in the First World declined dramatically throughout the twentieth century. Tuberculosis no longer sets a person apart, it does not make someone seem as though he or she possess special creative qualities. Tuberculosis became, and still remains, a force to be conquered, not celebrated.

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**Sanctifying Slaughter: Predatory Culture in Robert
Browning's "Porphyria's Lover" and "My Last Duchess"**
Asit Panda

Sir E. B. Tylor (1832-1917), the renowned British anthropologist in the opening lines of his book, *Primitive Cultures* (1871) offered us one of the oldest definitions of culture as that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. Victorian morality, an essential component of Victorian culture, can be described as any set of values that espouse sexual restraint, low tolerance of crime and a strict social code of conduct. During the Victorian and Edwardian periods British society was underpinned by rigid moral and social values; with ideal forms of masculine and feminine behaviour. Moral respectability and domesticity were important ideologies of feminine behaviour. The 'woman's mission' was that of supportive wife, dutiful daughter, and caring mother, and the woman's domestic role was viewed as an important and pivotal part of society. In Victorian society repression of sexual desire was regarded as a sign of good breeding and was encouraged by popular ideas such as the "cult of true womanhood", the "code of chivalry" and the Social Purity movement.

However, like many other fields, in the field of sexuality the Victorians had their well-known compromise. Although the Victorians permitted indulgence in sex, they restricted its sphere to conjugal felicity and happy married life. They disfigured physical passion and illegal gratification of sex impulse. The possibility of any relation between man and woman other than the conjugal was something alien to Victorian morality. In Tennyson's *Lady of Shallot* we are introduced to 'two young lovers' walking in the moonlight, but we are at once reassured by the information that these two lovers were 'lately wed'. The Victorian ideal was to achieve 'wedded bliss' rather than satisfaction of the sexual urge by illegal and unauthorized methods.

Women, who were fettered by specific societal and familial mores and roles in nineteenth century England, were held to a higher, almost impossible, standard of abstinence, and were judged more harshly for moral transgressions than their male counterparts. Popular notions regarding the role of the woman in society concentrated on the "submissive wife". Women had to be seen as incarnation of purity, almost like angels but not as normal humans. The Victorian ethic made, as Haughton commented, "fidelity the supreme virtue and sexual irregularity the blackest of sins" (356).

But in the sphere of sexuality, Victorian society was marked by a manifest double-standard. While it was unimaginable that a woman would have any sexual thoughts, it was understood that a man did. Women were supposed to repress their sexuality. Women seen as falling short of society's expectations were believed to be deserving of severe penalty which sometimes culminated in social ostracism. Women were expected to have amorous relationship with only one man, their husband. If women did have sexual contact with another man, they were seen as *ruined* or *fallen*. A young lady's worth was measured in terms of her chastity and complete innocence. Once led astray, she was the 'fallen woman', and nothing could reconcile that till she

passed away. Victorian literature and art are replete with examples of women paying dearly for straying from moral expectations. Adulteresses met tragic ends in novels such as *Anna Karenina* by Tolstoy, *Madame Bovary* by Flaubert, while in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Thomas Hardy depicts a heroine castigated by her community for losing her virginity before marriage. While some writers and artists showed sympathy towards women's subjugation to this double-standard, some works were didactic and reinforced the cultural norm.

Now against the backdrop of this widely discussed Victorian morality and the accompanying double-standard, I intend to attempt in my present paper a critical interrogation of Robert Browning's two popular poems and his portrayal of women characters. As Mary Elizabeth Burt observes, "In his portraiture of women Robert Browning has shown himself a consummate artist". Through his characters in both the poems "Porphyria's Lover" and "My Last Duchess", Robert Browning incorporates, vivid and violent imagery that reveal his sexual and social views of women. These writings suggest Browning's transgressive outlook on the societal roles of women. Apart from dealing with two mentally disturbed male characters, "Porphyria's Lover" and "My Last Duchess," demonstrate striking similarities in portraying these male characters' relationships with women who, despite apparently being loved by their male partners, are eventually mercilessly slaughtered. And interestingly enough, both men seem to be much happier after they have committed these murders, a fact which highly astonishes modern rational readers who conclude by considering such gruesome murders as actions of abnormal psychology. But when viewed from the perspective of Victorian morality and the harsh punishment the society kept reserved for its female transgressors of moral codes, the murders of the heroines of these two poems do not surprise us so much, rather seem inevitable.

"Porphyria's Lover" was first published as "Porphyria" in the January 1836 issue of *Monthly Repository*. The poem did not receive its definitive title until 1863. The opening lines are evocative of a fierce and malicious natural force, which is illuminated later on in the poem. The 'elm-tops', which have been torn down, signals death and anticipates Porphyria's terrible future. The storm outside has some sort of correspondence with mental agitation within that provokes the lover. Yet, while depicting this violently animated nature, the lover sounds perfectly sane and his speech proceeds clearly and logically. Entering the cottage Porphyria "kneeled and made the cheerless grate/Blaze up, and all the cottage warm" (Browning 8-9). At this point it must be said that the reader cannot be sure of what kind of woman Porphyria is. The speaker carefully avoids disclosing her true identity. What his speech betrays—"vainer ties dissever"—makes her identity and position in the society all the more equivocal. We cannot be sure whether she was a married woman or not. One thing is, however, clear that she belonged to the higher stratum of society than the speaker.

Variant readings have attempted to adjudicate the poem's class and gender politics, seeing Porphyria as "promiscuous" (Shaw 75), "too proud to marry him" (Burrows, 63), the lover as "a working class man who strangles his mistress in order to keep her true and faithful" (Hawkin 63), the murder as a displacement of erotic passion (Lamgbaum 83), or an indictment of the bourgeois values that infect and alienate desire. Since the speaker may be insane, it is impossible to know the true nature of his relationship to Porphyria. Theories, some of them rather bizarre,

abound: some contemporary scholars suggest, for example, that the persona may be a woman; if so, the strangulation could stem from frustration with the world. An incestuous relationship has also been suggested; Porphyria might be the speaker's mother or sister. Another possibility is that she is a former lover, now betrothed, or even married, to some other man. Alternatively, she may simply be some kind lady who has come to look in on him, or even a figment of his imagination.

However, about the basic narrative of the poem most readers would agree: that it deals with a clandestine meeting, real or imagined, transgressive in terms of contemporary sexual mores and codes of conduct, the outcome of which is the slaughter of the woman. In terms of the domestic ideology, Porphyria's flight, unchaperoned, from the socially-defended space and activity of the "gay feast" might seem to promise the breaking of further taboos. The bringing of physical comfort and intimacy, suggestive of mutual physical contentment, is experienced by the male, however, as sexually seductive: the reiterated "and" records his escalating rapt attention to the woman's progressive undressing, her attempt to rouse him first by calling his name, and then by offering "her smooth white shoulder bare".

The murder, when it comes, at once accuses Porphyria of her sexual "fall", and saves her from it. The enactment of the murder has a ritualized quality that underlines the speaker's sense of himself as moral agent: "... all her hair / In one long yellow string I wound / Three times her little throat around / And strangled her"(Browning 38- 41). Motivated by the prevalent notion of morality, the speaker finds Porphyria culpable but not himself. Much can be made of the final line: "And yet, God has not said a word!" Possibly, the speaker seeks divine sanction of the murder. He may believe God has said nothing because He is satisfied with his actions. God may be satisfied because: He recognizes that the persona's crime is the only way to keep Porphyria pure; or, because He doesn't think her life and death are important compared to the persona's. The persona seems waiting for some sign of God's approval.

William Devane tells us that the event described in Browning's "My Last Duchess" has a basis in Italian history and that the Duke is a poetic recreation of Alfonso II, Duke of Ferrara, the story of whose first and second marriage is similar to the story of Browning's Duke (cited in Kanda 28). But in the handling of the theme, manifest influence of Victorian age is perceived. In the words of K. C. Kanda, "Possibly, Browning saw in the Italian situation a relevance to his own age, the age of Queen Victoria which was experiencing a similar crisis resulting from the clash of religious and secular forces, of evangelical zeal and materialistic ambitions, furthered by the growth of industrialization" (28). As presented in the poem, the Duchess's sin is that she violates the code of conduct for a noble wife. Yet, can the modern reader really feel the woman did anything wrong? The only sin in this poem is that the woman fails to suppress her emotions. The real problem is that she defied the idea that women are not supposed to be as sexually open as men. Women were to serve as the "Angel in the House" but the Duchess defied that image. That type of thinking is characteristic of Victorian standards of women. This is especially true of the upper classes to which the Duchess belongs.

Browning portrays the young Duchess as a victim of social codes. The Duke feels as if the Duchess "should derive pleasure essentially only from himself" (McCoy 3). She was looked at from other males as a sexually attractive woman.

Even in a portrait that the Duke is showing a guest after her untimely death she has an erotic look in her eye but it isn't necessarily toward the Duke. He says that "Paint/ Must never hope to reproduce the faint/ Half-flush that dies along her throat" (Browning 17-19). He never wants to be with another woman who is like her. The Duke wanted a woman who would only obey and pay the utmost and strict attention to only him.

The Duchess is unjustly accused of being adulteress when, in fact, she is just a typical young woman. The Duke misinterprets her childish curiosity as a sign of disrespect. Browning sets the poem up to show how women are considered as property and how ridiculous such treatment is. Even in death, the Duchess is still a possession. The Duke commissioned a painting of her in order to symbolize that he will always possess her. Yet, the painting also allows the Duchess to aggravate him in death. Domhall Mitchell claims that "[i]n the Duke's eyes, the woman had defects that he could not ignore, even in artistic representation" (74). When showing the painting off, he comments on the color painted in her face, "Sir, 'twas not/ Her husband's presence only, called that spot/ Of joy into the Duchess' cheek" (Browning 13-15). The Duke cannot come to terms with the fact that his Duchess is so immodest in his view. The Duke insinuates that the Duchess had an affair in order to make him seem like a victim to the Count's agent. Only the reader realizes she was the victim of a man who felt his masculinity was being threatened. The Duke claims, "She had/ A heart-how shall I say? -too soon made glad, / Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er/ She looked on, and her looks went everywhere" (Browning 21-24). The generosity of heart and the innate simplicity, which the Duke mistakes for signs of adultery, prove eventually disastrous for the Duchess as she has to pay with her life: "Oh sir, She smiled, no doubt, / Whene'er I passes her; but who passed without / Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together" (Browning 43-46). Mitchell notices the Duke's view of women: "his wife is quite literally converted into an object of art, and it is noticeable that he refers to his next bride as "my object" (75). The Duke's pride of owning the Duchess, even in death, embodies the mentality of the early Victorians that women were seen as possessions. Thus the poem deals with society's high expectations of women's control over their own nature. The duchess fails to observe the standards set before her and consequently gets slain.

Hence, as it appears from a specific reading of Robert Browning's two poems, extramarital love or the amorous relationship between man and woman transgressing social taboos is sure to face disaster. And it is not the man but the woman who has to pay dearly for such violations. Rightly it has been pointed out by W. T. Young that "The tragedies of love are for Browning's women rather than for his men" (xxxii). But interestingly, as critics like Young have observed in conformity with the general Victorian attitude toward love and sexuality, Browning's poems celebrate triumphs of love in poems of wifhood and motherhood. However, the two poems examined in this paper, apart from exposing Victorian double-standard regarding sexuality, seem to reveal how the specific culture of an epoch marginalized female sexuality as insignificant, condemnable and punishable. And Browning's women characters, despite their apparent innocence and at times inherent nobility, seem to have fallen preys to the specific codes and mores of a patriarchal society in which they inhabited.

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East-West synthesis: Rabindranath Tagore, the Janus-headed Nationalist

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According to the primitive Roman mythology, Janus is the god of beginnings and transitions, with his two faces turned in opposite directions that symbolize the forward and backward visions of the god. He is frequently represented as a god allegorizing progress from past to future, from one state of existence to another, from one vision to another as he can see into the past with one face and into the future with the other. Since his two heads are dovetailed in a unique way, this combination suggests the mysterious reconciliation of the opposites, hence a meeting ground between the two extremities, between barbarism and civilization. The status of Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) as a uniquely ambivalent nationalistic thinker can fairly be equated with the double-headed Roman god because of his singular ideal of his life-long dream of synthesis of the East and West. He jeered at the motto 'East is east and West is west and never the twain shall meet'. He rather believed wholeheartedly that a commonwealth of nations is possible in which each nation will participate in a world festival by their mutuality of cultural and intellectual properties. In an essay, named 'Bangalir asha o nairashya' (The hope and despair of Bengalis), written much before his first visit to England, Tagore writes longingly:

The European idea in which freedom predominates, and the Indian idea in which welfare predominates; the profound thought of the eastern countries and the active thought of the western countries; European acquisitiveness and Indian conservatism; the imagination of the eastern countries and the practical intelligence of the West – what a full character will be formed from a synthesis between these two.¹

Tagore was an earnest advocate of inter-civilizational alliance; his imagination was given to a symbiosis of the Oriental and the Occidental which are so commonly deemed to be diametrically opposites, hence he is Janus-like. But what is most surprising is that Tagore was not only a poet, philosopher and thinker; he was an active worker, who had endeavoured, throughout his career, through various political and professional activities, to actualize his ideal. He was not a passive dreamer living in the utopian world of fantasy. He was fundamentally a poet, but his earnestness in spreading the message of East-West synthesis through art and actual life proves his artistic and social obligations.

It is well-known fact that though Tagore's life-long ideal had been to strike a synthesis of the East and West, he was critical of both, especially of the West on various issues, but predominantly, on the issue of the Eurocentric notion of militant nationalism. "A nation", according to Tagore, "in the sense of the political and economic union of a people, is that aspect which a whole population assumes when organized for a mechanical purpose...It is the side of power, not of human ideals."²

His criticism of the West becomes fierce when he goes on to trace out the effects of this mechanical nation on the spiritual life of the people of the East. He thinks that the western nation can never lead to the betterment of the human civilization because it is born and brought up with the ideals of greed, competition, exploitation, non-cooperation and expansion of geographical territory. Surprisingly, these ideals are also the fundamental principles of colonialism and imperialism which Tagore hated so much. So, it is Tagore's conviction that the western nation and nationalism can do never good to the East but can produce only the effects of dehumanization and moral bankruptcy at the cost of the living human ideals:

This process (nationalism), aided by the wonderful progress in science, is assuming gigantic proportion and power, causing the upset of man's moral balance, obscuring his human side under the shadow of soulless organization. We have felt its iron grip at the root of our life, and for the sake of humanity we must stand up and give warning to all, that this nationalism is a cruel epidemic of evil that is sweeping over the human world of the present age, and eating into its moral vitality.³

This anti-nationalistic sentiment has been most brutally manifested in a poem entitled, 'The Sunset of the Century', composed on the last day of the nineteenth century. The blank verse, so deftly handled, brings out the volcano of passion of derision against the all-devouring ideal of nationalism of the poet-humanist:

The last sun of the century sets amidst the blood-red
Clouds of the West and the whirlwind of hatred.
The naked passion of self-love of Nations, in its
Drunken delirium of greed, is dancing to the clash
Of steel and the howling verses of vengeance.

The hungry self of the Nation shall burst in a
Violence of fury from its own shameless feeding.
For it has made the world its food.
And licking it, crunching it and swallowing it in big
morsels,
It swells and swells
Till in the midst of its unholy feast descends the
Sudden shaft of heaven piercing its heart of
grossness.⁴

Through out his long literary career Tagore had waged a crusade against this 'fetish of nationalism' because he believed that the culture of nationalism is harmful for both the subject race and the master race as it generates "the dense poisonous atmosphere of world-wide suspicion and greed and panic."⁵

But Tagore who had been so violent as a rebel to western nationalism, cultural decolonization, colonialism and imperialism, is not blind to evaluate the role of the West in shaping the Indian community into a disciplined, justice-loving nation:

The protection of law is not only a boon, but it is a valuable lesson to us. It is teaching us the discipline which is necessary for the stability of civilization and for continuity of progress...The reign of law in our present Government in India has established order in this vast land inhabited by peoples different in their races and customs. It has made it possible for these peoples to come in closer touch with one another and cultivate a communion of aspiration.⁶

Tagore's relationship with the West, like many other things, had been ambivalent. He is not always a blind antagonist to the West. In many occasions, he acknowledges his debt to the West. As in the essay, 'Nationalism' he acknowledges the superiority of the British culture, literature and humanistic ideals:

I have a deep love and a great respect for the British race as human beings. It has produced great-hearted men, thinkers of great thoughts, doers of great deeds. It has given rise to great literature. I know that these people love justice and freedom, and hate lies. They are clean in their minds, frank in their manners, true in their friendships; in their behaviour they are honest and reliable. The personal experience which I have had of their literary men has roused my admiration not merely for their power of thought or expression but for their chivalrous humanity.⁷

Thus Tagore conveys his solid faith that the West is a land not only of modern technology and scientific advancement but also of benevolent humanity. But at the same time, he acknowledges impartially that these are insufficient to make a nation complete and self-sufficient. The West must come in contact with the East which is the land of spirituality to celebrate a carnival of perfect cultural unification. Hence, Tagore's final verdict is, "...West is necessary to the East. We are complementary to each other because of our different outlooks upon life which have given us different aspects of truth...And when in India we become able to assimilate in our life what is permanent in Western civilization we shall be in the position to bring about a reconciliation of these two great worlds."⁸

The harmful effect of chauvinistic nationalism on the average Bengali is narrated powerfully in his two novels, *The Home and the World* and *Four Chapters*. The novels can also be read as examples of Tagore's self-criticism. Tagore intends to give warnings to his countrymen against the blind worshipping of the western splendour of materialism and nationalism by losing the cultural and racial distinctiveness. He is also critical of China and Japan, the two great Asian nations, for their propensity to follow the path of the West by sacrificing their ancient, pre-historic tradition of spirituality and cultural heterogeneity. Needless to say, despite Tagore's criticism of the East, he had a profound love and respect for the Oriental traditions, especially the great Indian religious and cultural traditions established by the sages like Chaitanya, Nanak, Kabir, Ramakrishna and the two great Indian epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* from the time immemorial. Thus Tagore maintains a balance between the Orient and the Occident in making either criticism or wholesale appreciation.

Tagore believed in an interactive world based on deep sense of elemental humanistic sympathy, generosity, mutuality, the main objective of which would be to create a morally and politically enlightened community of nations. The concept of nation based on the ideals of mutual hatred, xenophobia, narrow-mindedness, mean selfishness, self-aggrandizement, and sense of greed is an anathema to Tagore. It is true, like all other humanists, Tagore also aspired for freedom; but mere 'political freedom' was not his ambition, his aspiration was for a spiritual freedom, intellectual freedom and moral freedom which is not curbed meanly by external compulsions or forces. The poem, 'Where the Mind is without Fear' finely illustrates his view:

Where the mind is without fear, the head held high;
Where knowledge is free; where through the night and day
The homestead walls have not, within their yard,
Shut up in small space a fragmented earth;
Where utterance wells up from the heart's spring;
Where the stream of work with pace unfaltering
From land to land through every quarter goes
With a myriad fulfillments along its course;
Where desert sands of petty rule have not
Choked justice's stream, diffusing manly worth
In hundred paths...
With ruthless blows from your own hand, awaken
India, O Father, into that heaven.⁹

In fact, this ideal of freedom has much in common with Tagore's own concept of 'Dharma' which he valued as something superior to mere political freedom. This 'Dharma' has nothing to do with religious norms; it is the essence of life, independent of any outside agency. This is where Tagore's idea of 'Dharma' meets with Gandhi's.

Tagore, like Shelley, was an idealist, a dreamer, but unlike Shelley, he was not an 'ineffectual angel'; his dream was based on the solid grounds of reality. His 'Visva-Bharati', a university set up at the heart of rural Bengal, Bolpur, Shantiniketan, was an earnest endeavour to materialize his dream of connecting East with the West. He wanted to make it a world centre for the study of humanity. He had the ambition to make his university a place somewhere beyond the limits of nation and geography. As the name suggests, the university was designed to nourish the distinctive cultures of both 'Visva', the world and 'Bharati', the Indian. Both the cultures would be nourished and nurtured simultaneously, without hampering their distinctiveness. Tagore intended the university to be a rendezvous of the East and the West. It would be a splendid example of cultural confluence, as it would be both local and global, hence post modernistic 'glocal'. But the execution of such a dream was nothing but a Herculean task. As Dutta and Robinson comment, "From 1918 until his dying day Tagore would bear his university on his shoulders almost like the

cross on the way to Calvary.”¹⁰ He had to travel from one country to another, from one hemisphere to another to collect funds for his dearest International University but, most importantly, as an apostle of universal brotherhood among nations to spread the message to stop the deadly dance of death and destruction, war and carnage.

Tagore was not only a great poet and a philosopher; he was also one of the great educationists who experimented with the system of education and tried to make a permutation of the western and Indian traditional systems of education. His ‘The Parrot’s Tale’ is a satirical exposition of the heartless, soulless, inhuman and mechanical western system of formal education that was forcefully applied to the Indian subcontinent during the colonial period. Instead, his ideal of education was based on the philosophy of reciprocal co-operation and a mutual interdependence of various cultures, a system that would bring out the best of the two worlds, the East and the West, the rural and the urban, the ancient and the contemporary. His ‘Visva Bharati’ was designed with that purpose of enshrining his innovative ideal of education.

Shriniketan, a rural village of Bengal, situated near Shantiniketan, offers a concrete example of Tagore’s endeavour at bringing about a peaceful reconciliation of the apparently divergent cultures and practices. In this village Tagore started a farm, the nucleus of his ‘institute for rural reconstruction’ with the untiring effort of Leonard Elmhirst, a young British agricultural economist which inspired many in the government of Independent India. The village was mostly populated by the ‘santhals’ or ‘adivasis’, the marginal community, living under the threat of extinction due to the onslaught of modernity. But Tagore, though he was not a professional anthropologist and an economist, he was instinctively aware of the need of preserving the marginal culture. He tried to solve the dire economic needs of the tribal people, educated them in health, scientific agriculture, and encouraged them to love their own tradition and culture without being swayed by the devastating wave of modernity.

At the heart of Tagore’s ideal of the synthesis of the East and West lies his fundamental faith in the philosophical and religious belief in the spiritual unity of man. This faith had been deep-rooted in his mind from his early youth, as Dutta and Robinson admit:

The idea of India as a land with a genius for the synthesis of East and West, which had been present in his writing as far back as 1878, grew to dominate his thinking. He had never been interested in the dynastic history of India and its violent political struggles: always in writing about Indian history he stressed what he saw as its spiritual unity, incarnated in the Buddha. In Tagore’s eyes, Buddha combined both contemplative spirituality and active spirituality-East and West so to speak.¹¹

Even in 'Nationalism' Tagore writes:

India has been trying to accomplish her task through social regulation of differences, on the one hand, and the spiritual recognition of unity on the other...Towards this realization have worked, from the early time of the Upanishads upto the present moment, a series of great spiritual teachers, whose one object has been to set at naught all differences of man by the overflow of our consciousness of God.¹²

So, this principle of the inter-civilisational union is the product of Tagore's staunch faith in religion. His whole corpus of writings consisting of poems, novels, dramas, songs, letters and essays is resonant with the ideals of cosmic peace, universal brotherhood, inter-national alliance, moral upliftment, and an espousal of this centrifugal outlook.

References:

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Alienation and Isolation in the Poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra

Sibasis Jana

Alienation is a creative ailment now-a-day. Many people suffer estrangement from the self and other. Caught in the web of dehumanizing forces and pitted against hostile social forces, man is besieged with the problems of survival and growth. Alienation is the outcome of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, cultural estrangement, social isolation and estrangement from the self. The 'silence-bound pilgrim' (Dr. Purnima Mehta) Jayanta Mahapatra was caught in the throes of alienation. His alienation from the Hindu culture was caused by his grandfather's acceptance of Christianity. His lingua-alienation was caused by his estrangement from the Oriya language. His alienation from the physical world was the outcome of his betrothal to the muse of poetry. His alienated mind mourns –

“Today, my father is dead; mother lives in the same old house as she did when father was alive. But I moved away from the house of my childhood to live by myself . . . Here in my own room, in this newer emptiness of this House, something keeps moving. I don't know what. But I cannot purge myself of that jungle, of that wasteland, where a hit of my childhood knocks still on that dark-faced door in stubborn silence.”

(The Door: Door of Paper)

Before we study the effects of alienation and silence upon Mahapatra, let us discuss what alienation connotes. The New Encyclopedia Britannica defines it as “separation from one's milieu, work, and products of work or self.” Hegel thinks that alienation arises from the gap between the inner world and the outer. Marx later used the term to emphasize the conditions of workers who are deprived of the satisfaction of experiencing their work in the capitalist society. And he stressed how the modern workers experience alienation not only within themselves but also among one another because of the competitive ethos of capitalism. It was developed and elaborated later by the 20th century social thinkers like C. Wright Mills, Herbert Marcuse and psychologist like Eric Fromm. Now it variously means powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, cultural estrangement, social isolation and self-estrangement. Modern man is most affected by alienation. To quote the new Encyclopedia once again –

“Modern man was isolated as he had never been before ---- anonymous and impersonal in an urbanizing mass uprooted from old values, yet without faith in the new rational and bureaucratic order”.

The Hegelian concept gives birth to literary voice. Shakespeare's Hamlet, the introspective prince, is alienated from himself and actually conscious of his own condition touching the dilemma of 'to be or not to be' in the 'aporia' theme.

The theme of alienation comes as a dominant motif in Indian English poetry. Like Jayanta Mahapatra, such contemporary Indian English poets as Parthasarathy, Ezekiel, Ramanujan, Shiv K. Kumar and Daruwalla voiced of alienation. "Rough passage" (1977) traces Parthasarathy's alienation from Tamil culture language. To Ezekiel alienation is "aesthetically very productive" (interview with Akuamal Ramachander). "You cannot pretend you can't play the game of alienation if you are genuinely alienated" says Ezekiel. Ezekiel is of the opinion that alienation can be both linguistic and cultural. Moreover a sensitive mind is likely to be alienated from an opportunistic society. Sex change is the latest form of alienation. To quote M.K. Naik –

"The strain and stress of modern living often tend to deepen social, cultural and religious alienation into existential alienation of varying degrees of intensity. Each of this aspect of alienation can be put to creative use by a writer, though the end product must obviously be judged both by the quality of the end experience sought to be communicated and the technical competence exhibited in the process."

Being a long exile A.K. Ramanujan is also alienated. His poetry stands under the shade of family tree. His Indian sensibility scraps his motion of alienation. Daruwalla also depicts his alienated thoughts with contemporary reality. Adil Jussawala wrote about personal predicament rooted in environment. He unfolds the theme of isolation, alienation, suffering, loneliness and loss of identify. In Arun Kolatkar alienation is clenched with quest(*Jejuri*). Kamala Das is alienated from the male dominated society and her use of English is restrained.

In Mahapatra all the basic tenets of alienation meet and merge one of the dominant strains. "So the silence. A silence of inevitability which could be more eloquent, more meaningful to the writer of words."

(Silence poetry's last word: Door to Paper)

He mentions Salinger, Emily Dickinson, Haiku poets, Juan Ramon Jimenez who writes with the words of silence. To quote Mahapatra again –

"To such a poet who uses his silence as a part of living, it helps to discover and consecrate the events of his life, a life which makes him truly vulnerable to the usual passions of writer, airs and conceit among them." -
(Door to Paper)

He has his vision embedded in the milieu around him. The exploitation of myth, rituals, legends, tradition, culture, hysterical truth give his heart a stroke of isolation and alienation in the name of identity crisis. Alienation, loneliness, aloofness from the milieu of Hindu tradition bears the stamp of his identity crisis. It shows him the path that he is in no man's island. His Christian culture shocked him the loss if

identity in the rituals, legends, tradition and culture of Hindu heritage. In spite of his alienated mind his attraction for root calls –

“To Orissa, to this land in which my roots lie and lies my past and in which lies my beginning and my end, I acknowledge my debt and my relationship.”

In an interview with Makarand Paranjape, Mahapatra asserts, “I seem to be pulled by tradition”. To overcome alienation he writes in ‘profuse strains’ –

“Poetry makes me write poems with a bad heart. I don’t know what that exactly means, but it is the heart that makes one turn secretly into someone a leader or loser perhaps – pushing one to choose values, attitudes, and the do the not so obvious, this heart as it keeps on trying to hide the wounded walls of its house, and itself for a meaning to our lives.”

(Door of Paper)

He may be compared with Pablo Neruda’s situation. Neruda was a solitary person and he wrote poetry in isolation and alienation His life and poetry show the path to get out of his loneliness. To quote V. Teitelboim, his friend and comrade –

“Solitude weighed on Neruda, that’s why he traveled from south to the North; he came out of the rains to the sunshine, in search of poetry, of the world, of love and of friendship.”

(Pablo Neruda Veo lo que viene y lo que nace)

Rain gives the vital dose to Neruda to overcome all kinds of solitude and anxiety. So Mahapatra, an ardent lover of rain which brings a promise of new life, wants to purify the inner psyche. With the rainfall he hankers after his ancestral tradition and for purification from dejected mind –

“Here is the tapestry of the year’s first rain,
Like an army, uniformed in gray,
But penitents, down on their knees,
What can ever wash the air of its gashed voices?
It is hard to tell now
What opened the anxious skies,
How age-old proud stones
lost their strength and fell,
and how the waters of the Daya
stanks with the bodies of my ancestors.

(Relationship /3 page - 14)

Mahapatra’s poetry gives the glimpses of powerlessness, normlessness, cultural estrangement, social isolation, self-estrangement, loneliness and silence; His early poems are the spurs of alienation. Loneliness hankers after his life’s movie and psychic scenario assumes poetic vase –

“Loneliness is when the ash
Upon the veneered table disintegrates
from the breath of ruptured egos,
Loneliness is when an act, a word

Hangs undecided and unborn
In the eyes of longing.
Loneliness is of a winner
Turned loser, traitor and beggar
in a centrifuge of possessions.
Loneliness is of now, of the noises
of the graves, of the silence of the waves,
of the explosions
of nameless is a face alive
labeled from my other selves,
flames from the pyre of plundered seconds”

(Loneliness: close the sky)

The poet suffered from loneliness and isolation. The battle din of life’s anxiety pervades his poetic wings caught up in the snare of summer’s fire. The wheels of his journey are gripped. All his hopes and aspiration are turned to ash. The loser, traitor, beggar all are destined to isolated forms. In the graves, waves the poet perceives silent tone. Everyone is identitiless and suffers from alienation in the form of nameless, faceless from the pyre of plundered seconds.

In Mahapatra’s poetry, the beggars estranged from the society at large. In the poem “The Blind Beggar” the poet shows empathy with the beggar, as loneliness is “common to us both”. It is a crowded lighted market place and “light wanders around him the whole day” where he stands in dejection –

“Light wondered around him the whole day
Where he stands. This is the main street
Pounding hugely like a leaning heart
This is the right corner for his quiet feat.
Moments illuminate his slumped
Sorrowing eyes can go no farther.
They will seem. Each one strong
And sullen, separately same.”

(- The Blind Beggar, Close the sky)

So being blind he is alienated from his vision and being beggar he is isolated from the pomp and splendor of light. The poet is also in the same track as he suffers from inward blindness. The corruptions of the society made him blind with beggarly description. The poet’s empathy for the beggar shows the alienated figures of the darker world. Mahapatra is much experienced man. His alienated mind enquires the meaninglessness of his life. Mahapatra sees closely the social violence and corruption and becomes dumb with silence –

“I have read the silence
That dances across the land at down
I have watched it grow
From a small lonely window.
It hurts.
The hundred thousand eyes.
When I try to get over it

It creep into my bed like furtive child”

(Silence, A Rain of Rites)

Alienated victims want to get the freshness of freedom, want to grasp the light from, darker lanes. As the beggars are the sufferers, the poet’s isolated mind captures the loneliness of Mahatma Gandhi, the peace negotiators and the nuns. In the poem “Gandhi” the alienated figures want to burst to bloom overcome loneliness. The waiting seemed meaningless and normlessness. The estranged multitudes bloom to share the forsaken leader –

“the multitude
waiting
to be born,
bitter:
under his tortured steps
we have burst open his blood
to bleed
we are on his side, perhaps
we hate him
We do not know it.”

(Gandhi / close the sky)

In this world the woman is the dejected fellow. She finds her life a meaningless, normless. Social isolation clutches her identify to alienation. The man woman relationship is a vague question to her. Question of rootlessness and social isolation make her estrangement from the society and her own self even the sense of togetherness is futile –

For how long futile
prolong this togetherness
of being vulnerable together,
in admiration for each other
and the free fusion of grief,

(Intimacy / svayamvara & other poems).

In this orthodox patriarchal society, the mother has the role of romantic resonance. But reality is of different smell. She wants to get the favor from the father in the family and so she has the attitude of self-pity. So she is wedded to spiritualism. She is busy and engaged in ‘puja –patha’. She feels alienated and dejected when all power of the four wall walled domesticity is transferred to her daughter –in-law. But still she aspires for the lost power, pity oozes in occasional settings. The mother is dejected, isolated and alienated from the other family members in the family and the poet expresses –

“And a mother’s hand floats like a raft
Endlessly down the river, still to find and end.....”

(Bazaar Scene: Shadow Space)

In this Indian decorum the most sufferers is the widow. Her life is destined to hazardous, painful and tortured. She is deprived of all the carnal and colourful desires of life. Social culture alienates her to perform spiritual and psychological

consequences. In this patriarchal country like India window's life is painful to religious sobriety –

“Her skin breaks into fickle shadows
That trial her to the corner of the little room
Where a stone icon stands, weary with vermillion
In an exotic drapery of hopes.”

(Widow: Shadow Space)

In Mahapatra's writings we not only get the ostracized women but also have the women who are suffers and exiled in their own home. Wife, daughter or a mother are deprived of their freedom in this male-dominated society. The wife is alienated from all the freedom she has drunk in her pre-marital existence. Physical happiness bids her alien form the coroner of his husband's part. Both physiological and psychological loneliness hung upon her estranged mind –

“On most nights there's woman
Who just lies in her bed open
Like any old thing in the house she lives in.
The walls keep their close watch
Over her loneliness; and not even that
Can go wrong here.....

(On Most Nights)

So after marriage the women are twice removed from freedom. Firstly she is lonely from the social decorum and secondary she is bowed and chained under patriarchal, colonial and post-colonial period in her life. What an irony in this patriarchal society –

“And the woman of sleepless nights hears
The footsteps of her loneliness slip out of her back door
Through the trees to a garden she has never been ”.

(On Most Night: Shadow Space)

Mahapatra is the master penetrator into the core of the female heart. He depicts the women crux under the society which alienates from them. They are alienated from husband's relationship and love-ladden physical carnal desires. A woman comes into the house of her husband's with almost hopes and fears, tension and anxiety but still has the dream in her vision. All hopes and aspirations are nipped in the bud when she is dejected in the bed; loneliness becomes her husband's substitute. Only 'funeral pyres' will show her path to complete freedom –

“The good wife
lies in my bed
through the long afternoon;
dreaming still, unexhausted
by the deep roar of funeral pyres.

(Indian summer)

In the lonely bed she has no partner to share her pains and aspirations. Narcissism becomes her icon. She fell in love with her own self, her shadow. Out of alienation she feels and devours satiety ----

“In the darkened room
A woman
Cannot find her reflection in the mirror
Waiting as usual
at the edge of sleep.
In her hands she holds
The oil lamp
Whose drunker yellow flames
Know where her lonely body hides.

(A Missing person)

To escape from darkness she seeks the help of oil lamp, it will help her touch the light of her life. The yellow flame is compared to the overcome absence of any sharing. So her lonely body hides to escape alienation. This is the picture of Mahapatra’s mother. To quote Mahapatra ---

“Swathed in a sari, holding onto the oil lamp
in the shadows, the sooty flames swaying the breeze:

(Jayanta Mahapatra, Contemporary Author Autobiography Series, vol. 9)

As the women suffer from alienation, our mother India also has the same suffering.
To quote R. Shankar –

“India also could not find her reflection
physically after decolonization, because during
the colonization India was plundered culturally,
traditionally and economically. India was,
virtually, converted into a skeletal shape.”

(R. Shankar, Jayanta Mahapatra the poet: Quest for Identity. Prestige.P-78)

Missing in the true inner self, our Indian lacks culture and tradition of the past glory. She fails to probe the ‘anima’ or the true inner self with the utmost bound of her estranged being. So here inner and outer both selves are tormented. Mahapatra’s artistic zeal is praiseworthy. To quote Kennedy – “A Missing person is an epiphany of the creative moment for Mahapatra”.

(Allan Kennedy, written Rites”, in Madhusudan Prasad, P - 93)

In case of unmarried girl also alienation clutches psychic pattern. When they are out of their parent’s artistic zeal is praiseworthy. To quote Kennedy – “A Missing person is an epiphany of the creative moment for Mahapatra.”

(Allan Kennedy, written Rites,” in Madhusudan Prasad, P - 93)

In case of unmarried girl also alienation clutches psychic pattern. When they are out of their parent’s home, they feel alienated and isolated as the male figures temptation oozes for voyeurism vision. Mahapatra takes the snapshots in the poetic impulse –

“But there goes Lakshmi down the road,
Swinging her light little hips in unison,

and he feels a part of himself forgive him,
the part that never gets out of him.”

(Awe: shadow space)

The male-gaze victimizes the unmarried – girl to feel insecure and dejected in the streets and other places. She feels alienated surrounded by male comments –

“The voluptuous figures of women in stone
only wish to save our feelings of love and freedom;
they are like old men who do not need their voices,
they have pulled them out their throats
and hidden them away in their past.”

(The Quest: Shadow space)

The poet hungers for an existential corner in the jaws of isolation, alienation and estrangement from the own self. He suffers from solitude and purposelessness in this world. The feelings he digested –

“here on earth
when history does not reverberate any more
with the pulse of the drum
or with the chant of the fide on a sacred Puri shore
as a burden of understood things
billows upward like smoke.”

(The lost children of America)

Here in this world we have a feast of somber and gloomy vision of life that is stamped by loss, dejection, grief, alienation and suffering. In “Hunger” and “The whorehouse in a Calcutta Street” we see how the nameless prostitutes hanging in identity-less alienation. They suffer in this cruel world. In “Hunger” the father victimizes his daughter to have sex with a customer for the fulfilled desire of both hunger from bodily passion and physical concern.

So hunger leads to alienation in the girl’s part. The trio-father, daughter and customer are alienated figures crux in this modern decorum –

“I heard him say; my daughter, she’s just turned fifteen.....
feel her; here. Be Back soon, your bus
leaves at nine. The sky fell on me, and a father’s exhausted
wile. Long and lean, her years wear cold as rubber.
She opened her wormy legs wide. I felt the
hunger there,
the other one, the fish slithering, turning inside.

(Hunger)

Moreover, we see how the modern men are dejected and alienated by the whores. The failure of the communication is not exclusive, perverse with the whore. “The condition of the modern man is itself solitary and alienated” (C.L.L. Jayaprada in vol II of “Indian Literature Today” edited by Dr. R.K. Dhawan). In the poem “The whorehouse in Calcutta Street” the poet invites the man to come to the whorehouse to have a greater experience of love and lust and relationship – and to fulfill dreams and fantasies –

“The faces in the posters, the public hoardings

And who are there all together.

(The Whorehouse in a Calcutta Street)

But the sufferer poet feels alienated and loneliness redoubled in form and action –

“And the walls you wanted to pull down
Mirror only of things mortal and passing by
and her lonely breath thrashed as against your kind.

(The Whorehouse in a Calcutta Street)

Jayanta Mahapatra highlights how Indian socio – cultural decorum thrust into lost generations. They are staggering in alienated darker world. The present state of India is suffering –

“What is wrong with my country?

The jungles have become gentle, the women restless.

And history reposes between the college girl’s breasts.

The exploits of warrior – queans, the pride pieced together.

(The Twenty fifth Anniversary of a Republic: 1975)

He felt humiliated and insulted for being Indian culture Smashed and corrupted into darker veil –

.....hiding jungles in her purse, holding on to her divorce,

And a lonely Ph. D.

(The Twenty fifth Anniversary of a Republic: 1975)

Women are free to get Ph. D. and higher aspiration. They get chance to fly over the globe. But the husband – wife conjugal relationship lost the fragrance of unified conjugation. They are alienated and separated from the Sati’s and Savitri’s vision of chastity and purity of India’s great virtuous women.

Mahapatra’s poetry strikes the glimpses of powerlessness, normlessness, cultural estrangement, social isolation, self-estrangement, loneliness and silence. The poet blossoms the vases with poetry from the ashes, remnants, graveyard, hunger, alienation, loneliness and isolation. From murderer to murdered, from master to silent slave, solitude to alienate his identity transmutes the easel of his poetry. From night to night, the empty window in his lonely wall is the material to flourish his ensigns and animations. Though alienate his dreams remain undaunted to renew morn by morn---

“I want the graveyard to flower without its corpses,

and the sunlit street

to shine without its shadows.
I want the flames to warm the empty heart
of love, to burn a city with pitiable hatred.....()
I want my government to hover
Like a butterfly over a garden;
not be, as it is, like a wasp or snake..... ()
I only want to renew myself
Like this old river's quiet
That has emerged victorious
Over a hurried layers of religion
In the airlessness of the dead.”

(Random Descent)

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Body Image in *King Lear*

Paromita Deb

From the end of the Middle Ages, physique was considered as an essential clue to a person's intellect and morality.¹ Physical appearance, hence, became an important, and often subversive, non-verbal signifier – it communicated diverse meanings transcending words.² Visual details of the character's body became increasingly implicit, subtle and submerged in Elizabethan dramas. Body images of the characters in Elizabethan dramas like, *King Lear* (1605), constitute shifting paradigms of power. In other words, in *King Lear*, the paper proposes, Shakespeare helps us understand the centrality of the human body to life, especially in understanding the self and the world.

In this play, the complex relationship between appearance and power is brilliantly illustrated through the interplay of various body images.³ In Act I Lear takes off his crown, in Act III he is bare-headed or, 'houseless head', and in Act IV he has a mock crown – 'Crown'd with ... weeds'. This is simultaneously a parody of both kingship and the concept of body politic. The story line and the effectiveness of the tragedy depends in part on the juxtaposition of two contrasting processes connected strongly with the body – the gradual stripping of kingship and dignity from Lear to the endowing him of a superior knowledge of naked humanity.

Again, a renewed understanding of body image leads Lear to self-discovery. The change in the body image of the King signals a change in his character as well as his disposition. Lear wears expensive and luxurious clothing at the beginning of the play.⁴ His first ceremonious entrance includes Attendants and trumpets signaling his rich and powerful social identity. As we gradually go through the Storm scenes in the play, we find the former King stripping off his royal robes. Whereas his body image in the opening scene suggests pomp and pride, in the third Act it represents suffering. In the Storm scenes, Lear begins to consider humans as no more than animals, except for the fact that the former wear clothes. This is a significant epiphany on the part of the King especially because he had prided himself on his image. As Lear raves on the heath, he begins to strip off his royal outwear.

'Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou ow'st the worm no silk, the beast no hide... Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off you lendings! Come unbutton here.' (III.iv.92-97). Finally in Act IV, scene vi, the Reconciliation scene, where the father and the daughter meet we find the former with 'fresh garments'. With attires transformed, both Lear and Cordelia meet as changed people. Infact, he comprehends the real worth of the 'bare' body for the first time – a body that is not draped with layers of clothing or illusions.

⁵ This realization leads him to express some genuine feeling for the suffering of others, for the first time:

'Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,
How shall our houseless heads and unfed sides,
You looped and windowed raggedness, defend you
From season such as these? O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this!' (III.iv.28-33).

Thus, an improved perception of the body image – both of himself as well as of his subjects – helps Lear to understand life in more mature terms than that at the beginning of the play.

Importantly, even Lear's death is aptly signaled through a brilliant body image – as he appeals --'Pray you, undo this button ...' (V.iii.283). He perhaps wants the button of his own throat to be loosened. Very subtly, therefore, Shakespeare hints that after the long self – revealing action of the play, here, finally, the old King directs attention not to himself, but to the Other, to Cordelia, now precious to him than his own life. As Kent suggests that Lear got freedom from the 'rack', or his body, this paper argues that the old King also got liberated from the limitations of his social and political body image, or, more precisely, the 'additions' in this 'tough world'. Hence, though at first, with reference to Lear body image represents power, in the third act of the play it becomes an idiom of his suffering, and finally towards the play's end it symbolizes a worldly delimiting prison from which he desperately wanted respite.

The ambiguity of the body images and the multiplicity of the body languages of the different characters, therefore, can be seen as a powerful and subversive dramatic strategy of restructuring of mentalities and societies along radically different lines.⁶ Through painfully rediscovering his own body image, and thereby comprehending the harsh materiality of the real world, Lear understands the essence of nothingness. The anxieties that this play reveal about body image point to the tenacious interconnectedness of body, discourse, performance, gender, power and politics. It is through a renewed understanding of the politics of body images that we can interpret our society in changed terms. In *King Lear*, Shakespeare, thus, this paper argues, articulated his worldviews through subtle and ambivalent presentation of body images of dramatic characters, making them sources of multiple narratives.

All references from *King Lear* are taken from The New Cambridge Shakespeare, ed. Jay L. Halio, South Asia: CUP, 1997.

¹ For a discussion on the ways in which the human image has been represented in the arts and literature of English Renaissance society, read [Lucy Gent](#) and [Nigel](#)

[Llewellyn](#), *Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture c. 1540-1660*, Reaktion Books, 1997.

² For more on Renaissance clothing and drama, see, Amanda Bailey, “‘Monstrous Manner’: Style and the Early Modern Theater”, *Criticism*, 43, 3, Summer 2001, p. 249 – 52.

³ Harriet Dye, in her article, ‘The Appearance – Reality Theme in *King Lear*’, *College English*, 25, 7, April 1964, p. 514-17, explains that, in this drama, the clothing imagery and motif are the illusions that differentiate appearance and reality.

⁴ Thelma Nelson Greenfield, in her study on ‘The Clothing Motif in *King Lear*’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 5, 3, (Summer 1954), p. 281-6, points out that, here, Shakespeare enriched the ‘clothes pattern’ which comes through familiar traditional associations and through his own consciousness of the relation of those associations to our human scheme of values.

⁵ In his renowned book, *This Great Stage: Image and Structure in King Lear*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University, 1948, reprinted 1963, p. 28, Robert Heilman while insisting on the importance of the ‘clothes pattern’ on the meaning and structure of the play, explains that: “The question of man’s seeing ... is complemented by the question of the obstacles to sight, of the resistance offered to his vision ... hence the clothes pattern, with its ramifications...”.

⁶ For a detailed analysis of the body and body image in early modern age, see Paromita Deb, ‘A Study of ‘the Body’ as an omnipotent concept across social, cultural and generic barriers’, *Dialogue*, VI, 1, June 2010, 40-46.

The Lady Or the Lord ? Gender Politics in ‘The Lady of Shallot’

Soumen Chatterjee

Gender and sex are often thought to have synonymous meanings, but they are different from each other. Sex is one’s biological identity, while gender is an artificial construction rooted in sociology. Actually, gender refers to “those characteristics of socio-cultural origin which are conventionally associated with different sexes”¹. Moreover, this artificial construction of gender is dominated by men and women have been given a secondary place in the hierarchy of this construction due to their physical weakness and reproductive power. Men have always restricted women in society by specifying their space and limiting their area of action. Indeed, a woman is not given any autonomous identity in society by men who consider women as commodity. Actually, a woman is not born as a woman, but society, dominated by men, turns her into a ‘woman’ restricting her into a liminal world. Simon De Beauvoir has described this fact in *The Second Sex* (1949) in the following words:

One is not born, but becomes a woman²

Against this gender oppression women have raised their voices, particularly from the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Mary Wollstonecraft is the first celebrated woman who questioned for the liberty of women in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) where she showed that in society women are not imparted education properly by men and this lack of education is responsible for their inequality in society and their unjust growth. She also presented her view that in society men are only interested in the beauty of women, not in the growth of their individuality. She also argued that as the women are not imparted education in proper way, they are not also successful as wives and mothers. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* she writes:

The conduct and manners of women, in fact, evidently prove that their minds are not in a healthy state;...One of the cause of this barren blooming I attribute to a system of education, gathered from the books written on this subject by men who, considering females rather as women than human creatures, have been more affectionate to make them alluring mistresses than affectionate wives and rational mothers³.

She demanded that the women should be given a proper education so that they could become aware of their rights. After Mary Wollstonecraft many women have questioned against this gender oppression and among them the name of Olive Schreiner is note worthy. Her *Women and Labour* (1911) shows that even in the social work division, women have always been exploited by men and men have always shown that the labour of women contributes nothing for the development of

society. Thus women's role in social progress has always been undermined by patriarchy. Next comes Virginia Woolf's seminal essay, *A Room of One's Own* (1929) where Virginia Woolf has shown that in order to be a novelist a woman needs two things most: financial stability and a 'Room'. Thus she questions for economic freedom and individual space for women, but these two requirements are denied to them by patriarchy. But the real triumph of feminism comes with Simon De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) where she explored that feminity is not natural to the women, but it is the patriarchal society that imprisons and devalues women. She has also presented the fact that in the patriarchal society, women are never defined as individuals but as 'OTHERS' standing in negative relation with men. She even regarded marriage that is always a dream of the women as a trap: for Simon De Beauvoir a woman's liberty is at first restricted by her parents and after marriage her husband, in the disguise of her protector, deprives her of her liberty. She writes:

There is a unanimous agreement that getting a husband- or in some cases a protector- is for her the most important of undertakings... she will free herself from the parental home...she will open up her future not by active conquest but by delivering herself up , passive and docile, into the hands of a new master...⁴.

Actually, Simon De Beauvoir regards marriage as a mode of exploitation on women by patriarchy and the husbands consider their wives not as individuals, but as slaves. Thus feminists have ventured their voices against the oppression of women by men.

Now in the Victorian age we find that Queen Victoria, a female, reigned on the throne of England, but the norms and customs of the males were worshipped in society and the women lived in restrictions. Women had no right to property and suffrage at that time; a woman's duties were to love her husband, manage the domestic affairs and care for her children. The woman who performed those duties well was considered ideal in society. But men freely worked in the outside world without facing any restrictions and dominated women. Literature of this age also presents the division between men and women; the poems of Coventry Patmore and Alfred Tennyson reflect that in society men worked in the outside world of action, while women worked in the inner world of domesticity. Tennyson has presented this division between men and women and of the dominance of men over women in his celebrated poem *The Princess: A Medley*:

Man for the field and women for the hearth:
Man for the sword and for the needle she:
Man with the head and woman with the heart:
Man to command and woman to obey: ⁵(5,363-366)

Again the patriarchal Victorian society adored the chastity of women and the women who lost chastity were considered fallen by patriarchy and they were always punished. Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* presents the story of Tess who, being seduced by Alec, lost her virginity, but was mentally pure. But patriarchy judged her loss of chastity as a crime and did not pay any heed to her mental sanity. Moreover, in the Victorian society a woman could make sexual relationship only

with one man- her husband, but men could have multiple partners. Actually, in the Victorian society there was one type of norm for men, another type for women.

Now in the literary sky of the Victorian era Alfred Tennyson is a representative poet of the society and *The Lady of Shallot* occupies a grand place in the Tennysonian canon. *The Lady of Shallot* was first published in December 1832 and then after several alternations it was published in its present form in the year 1842 and it consists of four parts. This poem presents the marginalized position of women in the Victorian society. When we first notice the the title of the poem, we find that the Lady does not have any proper name; she bears only a title and is identified with the place of her living. Actually, the very title of the poem points out that in the patriarchal Victorian society women were deprived of their individual identity.

Here we find that the Lady lived in the liminal world of Shallot and had no access to the world of Camelot. Shallot here represents the domesticity of life while Camelot stands for the public life of action; the domestic interior belonged to women while the public exterior was possessed 'a priori' by men. Thus the poem replicates, as Tim Bariinger observes –

the Victorian ideology of separate spheres...women's work is inside the home, while the active work in the outside world remains a male preserve⁶.

In that world of Shallot the Lady led a restricted life weaving always a magic web:

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay (2,37-38)⁷

This weaving on her part is suggestive of the duties imposed on women by patriarchy and these duties restricted women from pursuing higher aims in life. Actually in this poem the Lady was not permitted to take part in the active life of the external world.

Again the web which she was weaving was not the direct representation of reality, rather she collected her materials from the reflections of the images on the mirror. Thus her aesthetic vision is twice removed from reality and as a result her art work lacks the depth of life. Moreover, here we find that she gathered her materials from the reflections of the images on the mirror and this mirror is symbolic of the media that distorts truth and presents truth in a new dimension to the people. Again as she could not participate in the active life directly, she became quite fed up and in her state of dissatisfaction she cried out:

I am half sick of shadows⁸(2,71)

Through this agonized utterance, she is actually presenting the miseries which were faced by the domestic women in the Victorian society.

But when she saw the image of active Lancelot on the mirror, that image aroused in her the desire to participate in the world of action. Then forgetting

her curse, she looked directly to Camelot and for that reason she had to die. So her wish to join in the active world of men failed forever. In this context Harold Bloom observes,

Thus, she is forever denied the experience of an active and passionate involvement with the world⁹.

Actually, her attempt to cross the boundaries of the domestic world for entering into the world of action brought the curse on her and caused her death. Thus the curse symbolizes the punishment that patriarchy imposes on women when they try to cross their limits. Actually, here through the fate of the Lady the poet is indicating the tragic fate of those women who tried to go out of their narrow domestic life. Thus this poem vividly presents the condition of those women who, as Christine Poulson observes,

...step out of their appointed sphere, and the judgment and punishment two which they are then exposed¹⁰.

Actually, like the Duchess in Browning's *My Last Duchess*, she is also a victim to the chauvinism of men. Moreover, when the Lady was dying, she was 'robbed in snowy white', the typical bridal dress of the women. This wearing of the bridal dress by the Lady at the time of her death is a severe attack on the system of marriage which means, as Tennyson implies here, the death of the self of women.

Again here we find that the Lady is the object of the male gaze; she is never a woman with desires, rather she is always desired. She is not seen by anyone:

But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shallot?¹¹(1,24-27)

But still the bower where she inhabits is the object of male gaze and her fairly qualities and her excellent mode of singing made her the talk of the town. This shows that in the male dominated society women are always the objects of attraction for men. Furthermore, when her dead body was washed ashore and the news of the death of this lovely Lady reached the royal banqueters, they became totally gloomy:

And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer¹²(4,155-156)

Actually, to these royal people the Lady was an object of sensual attraction and for this reason her death caused their dejection. At last the knight Lancelot came there and praised the sensual beauty of the Lady and begged to God to bless her 'grace':

He said, 'She had a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shallot¹³(4,160-162)

These words of Lancelot are significant as they show that in the patriarchal society a woman is judged by the yardstick of her physical beauty. Moreover, he appealed to God to bless her 'grace' and here by 'grace' Lancelot implies those qualities in women which attract men. Thus Tennyson through Lancelot implicitly pointing that God creates women for the enjoyment of men.

Thus, in *The Lady of Shallot*, we find that the Lady is not an independent woman; on the other hand in every step of her life she , like Nora Helmer of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* ,is victimized by the lords of society.

But at present the condition of women has improved a lot and we all hope that in future there will a society where there will be equality between men and women.

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Waiting for Godot: A Drama about Man and Religion

Anupam Santra

“If I knew [What is meant] , I would have said so in the play”
Samuel Beckett

That the critics had a hard time with Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* has become one of the sustaining myths of the Beckettian critical industry. What makes the critics most uneasy is not only simply that Beckett seeks to develop a new convention, or that he uses the stage in surprising and innovative ways, but that he threatens to abandon convention and theatricality altogether. Beckett's theatre seemed unique, and uniquely threatening to most of his fifties' critics because what he appeared to the stage is nothing. In a review of a performance Anouilh commented “Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful”[92]. Hobson speaks for many bemused contemporary critics with comments, in a review of 1955 performance in London, that, ‘in course of the play, nothing happens’. He also says that there is no ‘dramatic progress’, ‘no theatrical tension’[93]. The play did not follow any theatrical rule .so it is not an easy task for the audience as well as critics to understand. Philip Hope Wallace's comment will be pertinent in this context: “The play bored some people acutely.” *Godot* also presented a second sort of challenge to its critics, which is not reducible to its rejection to established theatrical convention. Gabriel Marcel in his *Les Nouvelles Litteraires* says that *Waiting for Godot* is “A play that can be recommended, provided we may clear that there is almost nothing in it that that resembles what we usually call theatre”. But the purpose of this paper is not to make a survey of the critical responses that stress the play's meaninglessness and nothingness, but to vindicate in my own feeble way that *Waiting for Godot* is a play about man and his religion.

Waiting for Godot is a sustained metaphor for modern man and his religion. In support of my argument I would like to quote Brooks Atkinson :“This drama has to convey the impression of some melancholy truth about the hopeless destiny of the human race”[New York Times]. In this play the two tramps – Vladimir and Estragon are the representatives of modern man. We are assailed by some intriguing questions when we go through the play —

Who are Vladimir and Estragon? Where did they come from? Were they all supposed to be normal?

We know that these questions have no definite answers. In the same way neither we know — where from we came and where we would go after our death. In this play, the particular and contingent features of life in the world dissolve to present us with a

concrete image of the universal reality of human existence, common to all culture, reducible to none (Boxall). To quote Alain Robbe-Grillet: “The human condition is to be there. Probably it is the theatre, more than any other mode of representing reality, which reproduces the situation most naturally”[111]. It is reminiscent of T.S. Eliot-

For thine is
Life is
For thine is the . . . (The Hollow Men)

Eliotian influence is writ large upon the play. Eliot’s *Hollow* try to pray, but fail in their attempt. They can only mumble incoherent bits of Lord’s Prayer. It is impossible for them to utter prayer. Beckett also presents modern men in the sameway-

Vladimir: Did you ever read the Bible?
Estragon: The Bible... (He reflects.) I must have taken a look at it.
Vladimir: Do you remember the Gospel?
Estragon: I remember the maps of the Holy Land. Coloured they were. Very pretty. The Dead Sea was pale blue. The very look of it make me thirsty. That’s where We’ll go, I used to say, that’s where we’ll go for our honeymoon. We’ll swim. We’ll be happy.

[Act-I]

Man has lost his faith in God and they no longer cling to something reassuring . This has resulted in the loss of vitality, both spiritual and emotional.

The fundamental imagery of *Waiting for Godot* is Christian. Fresher says: “*Waiting for Godot* is a modern morality play on permanent Christian theme”[98]. As Beckett himself remarked, “Christianity is a mythology with which I am perfectly familiar, so I naturally use it (qtd in Duckworth18). There is frequent use of the Biblical allusion in the first act. The story of the ‘two thieves’, ‘the Dead Sea’, ‘John the Baptist’ incorporated into the texture of the play establishes the play’s Christian note. Vladimir’s false alarm concerning Godot’s arrival is suggestive of messianic herald. “The wind in the reeds” echoes Jesus’ remark about John the Baptist:

We went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? . . . But what went ye for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is *he*, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, Which shall prepare thy way before thee [Matthew 11.7-10 (Kristin Morrison 59)

We can identify Lucky with the symbolic figure of Christ. The parallels between Christ and Lucky are strong. Lucky chained with a rope, is the humiliated prisoner,

much like Jesus who was the prisoner of the Romans after Judas turned him in. Estragon beats, curses, spits on Lucky exactly as the Romans treated Jesus when taking him for Crucifixion. Lucky carries the burden of Pozzo's bag like a perpetual cross, and he is led to a public fair where he will be mocked. The Romans paraded Jesus on the hill for public scorn. Pozzo, paraphrasing Estragon's question, then asks a rhetorical question concerning Lucky: 'why he does not make himself comfortable?' This question refers specifically to the taunt spectators hurled at Jesus, "save yourself, why don't you? Come down off the cross if you are God's son", and this refers generally to Christ's mission on earth.

Waiting of the two tramps is symbolic. It refers to man's anguished waiting for the 'Second Coming' of Christ on earth. That the play is concerned with the hope of salvation through the working of grace seems clearly established. According to the Bible Christ came for the salvation of mankind. In this respect we may quote a few lines from the Bible-

For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. . . . They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other (Matthew 24:27, 30b, 31).

From the above discussion we may say that the play rings out with a note of Christian pursuit for an ideal. It is about waiting with a throbbing heart for its fulfillment that never comes.

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