On Literature

Edited by
JAIDEV

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY, SHIMLA
in association with
ALLIED PUBLISHERS LTD.
New Delhi Bombay Calcutta Madras Lucknow
Bangalore Hyderabad Ahmedabad

First published 1990

Published by the Secretary for
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY
Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla 171 005
in association with
ALLIED PUBLISHERS LIMITED
Prarthna Flats, Ist floor, Navrangpura, Ahmedabad 380 009
15 J.N. Heredia Marg, Ballard Estate, Bombay 400 038
3-5-1129 Kachiguda Cross Road, Hyderabad 500 027
Patiala House, 16A Ashoka Marg, Lucknow 226 001
5th Main Road, Gandhinagar, Bamgalore 560 009
17 Chittaranjan Avenue, Calcutta 700 072
13/14 Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi 110 002
751 Mount Road, Madras 600 002

ISBN 7023-314-3

Typeset at Tulika Print Communication Services Pvt. Ltd.
15/15 Sarvapriya Vihar, New Delhi 110 016

Printed at Saraswati Printing Press
Sector 5, A-95, NOIDA

Foreword

The Indian Institute of-Advanced Study publishes the results of research projects carried out by its fellows, the proceedings of seminars organised by the Institute from time to time and lectures delivered by its Visiting Professors. The fellows of the Institute and visiting scholars present papers to the weekly seminars of the Institute which are considered for publication from time to time. Whenever a number of papers have a bearing on the same theme they are published in the form of a book under the scheme of Occasional Papers. *On Literature* is such a volume.

As Dr Jaidev points out in his editorial Introduction, while a few papers are devoted to analysing texts in considerable depth, the majority have a strong theoretic bias. One problematizes modernism in Indian short fiction. Another seeks to define the novel of colonial consciousness in the Third World. In three other papers, feminism, especially feminist literary theory, gets defined, assessed and critiqued. There are also papers dealing with such 'eternal' issues as the nature of fictional belief and the relationship between poetry and truth. I have every hope that this volume will be of great interest to all scholars and students of literature.

J.S. GREWAL
Director

Contents

Introduction

The present volume includes nine of the papers on literature delivered during the past few years in the Indian Institute of Advanced Study. Of these, three were originally presented by visiting scholars; the rest were of the work-in-progress kind from the Fellows in residence. These have been revised for publication in the volume by the authors themselves, except in the case of A.K. Jha's paper which was substantially shortened and edited by the editor.

As is clear from the name of the series, these 'occasional papers' do not claim a pre-defined, integrating concept behind them. Both in their range of subjects and in their various approaches, they are characterized by multiplicity rather than unity. To some this is bound to appear as the chief weakness of the volume, though to some others there might be some merit in its non-programmed plurality.

Still, a number of papers here share an overall common thrust. This is related to the orientation of the Institute. While a few papers are devoted to analyzing texts in considerable depth, the majority have a strong theoretic bias. One problematizes Modernism in Indian short fiction. Another seeks to define the novel of colonial consciousness in the Third World. In three other papers, feminism, especially feminist literary theory, gets defined, assessed and critiqued. There are also papers dealing with such 'eternal' issues as the nature of fictional belief and the relationship between poetry and truth. That today there is no consensus on practically any theoretic issue is exemplified in sharply polemical positions taken in several papers here.

In his critique of Eva Schaper's distinction between first-order beliefs and second-order beliefs, the latter being proper to our experience of fiction, Bijoy H. Boruah goes quite some way endorsing her view. The issue itself is not new; nor is the distinction which in fact is present in, among others, I.A. Richards and Frank Kermode. What is interesting both in Schaper and in Boruah's critique is that the relatively obscure area between the two orders of beliefs is charted logically, step by step, as it were. Boruah's essay does not discuss the possibility of second-order beliefs allowing within their space the presence of first-order beliefs, as, say, in a novel like *The French Lieutenant's Woman.* To many less logical persons, it would seem that the two orders, different as they are, are not quite as distinct. One has to appreciate the point behind the complaint made by those who talk of their manipulation by, say, the media news. In any case, Boruah leaves us with quite a few thought-lines along which one can speculate endlessly, for the paradigm holds even if one realizes that so many of our first-order beliefs, entailing what he calls 'existential commitment' only appear to be so. Intentionality is rightly considered by Schaper to be an important constituent in the belief situation, but there are other constituents, too, including the quality of fiction which seeks to generate fictional emotion in the receiver. Still more important perhaps is that implication in the convention of fiction by which the reader or spectator wills to suspend his or her disbelief, this willing probably not turning the reader into a deranged person but into a different being, for the duration of the reading or watching a fiction.

Pabitra Kumar Roy's paper describes Sri Aurobindo's views on poetry and truth; these views are part of a new aesthetics and serve as 'the hermeneutics of his own poetical achievements.' Sri Aurobindo blurred the difference between poetry and truth by calling poetry 'intuitive thinking,' and this line of thought, says Roy, aligns him with such thinkers as Heidegger and Whitehead as well as with the minds behind our Vedas where poetry is used for disclosing Being or Logos, where poetry is *mantra* indeed. As such, poetry is closely related to truth; both effect a widening of human consciousness. Roy defines *rasa* as the means of grasping the essence of things. Poetry generates *rasas* and thus enables the reader to grasp their essence. Accordingly, poetry is seen as something inspired; it reveals the delight that 'eternally exists.' Roy also compares Sri Aurobindo's views with those of Kant, especially those relating to disinterestedness and objective subjectivity. As opposed to man's surface existence where ego rules, his essential existence craves the delight of Being, and the importance of poetry lies precisely in its enabling the reader to satisfy this deep longing within himself. Since poetry is man's lien on the Absolute, it can be a force for change in the human situation, too. This is why imagination occupies such a central place in Sri Aurobindo's aesthetics, although he differentiates between several levels of imagination. Finally Roy describes Sri Aurobindo's four grades of the planes of experience. 'Whatever may have been the grade of consciousness at work behind the creations of beauty, what is important is the fact that the delight has always been a figure of the delight of Being.'

Adapting the insights of Bakhtin, Foucault, Gramsci, Fredric Jameson, Barbara Godard, Homi Bhabha and Abdul JanMohamed, Om P. Juneja seeks to evolve a theory of the novel of colonial consciousness. This novel has two phases: dominant and hegemonic. It is during the latter phase that it turns dialogic, resistant, nativized; it uses local folklore and myths; and it employs camouflage and subversive mimicry. This genre is situated in the contemporary space of colonial consciousness which has a hierarchical system of variables and constants. Racism is a main constant and central to this consciousness. Among the variables, the most important are the historical past and its distortion which results in the loss and/or confusion of group and individual identities. The novel of colonial consciousness comes from a bifocal, split vision, and when the novelist is conscious of his predicament, he turns this vision to the best possible use, i.e. for creating fictions that explode the Western genre and its mode from within, as it were. The result is several distinct fictional processes and procedures which cannot be appreciated in neo-Aristotelian terms. The contestatory discourse of the genre 'positions itself as the protagonist of a literature of resistance with the conventions, though marginally so, of the dominate discourse.' Its discourse has different epistemes as well as a different sense of chronology and history and a different mode. Above all, it celebrates ethnicity and difference. Juneja illustrates his theory from novels written across half a century and in countries as far apart as the USA and India.

In her essay on American avant-garde fiction, Suzette Henke offers a lucid account of postmodernism. She rightly goes back to Cervantes' *Don Quixote* to assure us that postmodernism did not spring overnight from the head of Ihab Hassan or Fredric Jameson but was already there, in an embryonic form, in the Spanish novel as well as its eighteenth-century offspring like *Tom Jones* and *Tristram Shandy*. And, of course, it is quite incipient in the works of Modernists such as Joyce and Faulkner. Discussing the works of avant-garde writers such as Barth, Robert Coover, and Pynchon, Henke isolates the most prominent features of postmodernism: its self-conscious ontological themes and self-reflexivity, its rejection of closure and fondness for Möbius-strip forms, its use of loops and disruptions, its reliance on heteroglossia and dialogic mode, and its Chinese-box like structure. Its self-reflexivity makes it narcissistic. It is towards the end of her essay that Henke, in passing, refers to the problematic of postmodernism which is clearly ideological in nature: 'But ultimately, we must step back into the problematic world which we all inhabit and try to improve the social, cultural, and economic conditions that make *this* society less than perfect for millions of twentieth century men and women.' From this new perspective, 'ludic, zany, self-referential' postmodernist fiction might well appear as 'an aesthetic indulgence of a decadent society.'

In his essay on feminism, Jaidev warns against that trendy feminism which belongs to the culture of pastiche. This kind can do no good to women's cause in India. Problematizing feminist literary theory, he sees it in the context of a more-or-less co-opted Western feminism which is fast becoming a cultural consumer article. This commodified feminism sells at home but eventually becomes an item for cultural export as well. Ideologically castrated, this trendy feminism exults in specialized jargon and abstruse concepts and terms, all of which diminish its value for praxis. Jaidev, then, reads comparatively a few contemporary Hindi novels. Those which use a responsible realistic mode, place the characters in a solid social milieu and bring a mature understanding of various kinds of pressures on them, are valuable as feminist texts even though some like *Basanti* by Bhisham Sahni are by male writers. In this category he includes the works of Mannu Bhandari and Krishna Sobti. On the other hand, novels like Bhagawati Charan Verma's *Rekha* use conceptualizations as substitutes for realism or social understanding, while the novels of Mridula Garg are trendy and pastiche in their desire to flaunt their foreign connexions. Such novels can only be a liability for women's cause. Jaidev concludes by pleading for feminist readings of texts, no matter whether they are written by men or by women.

Malashri Lal is more enthusiastic about American feminist theory, and this is because she focuses on the more purposeful, more rewarding area of this theory, namely the non-academic concepts developed by practising novelists. She begins by raising the question of canonization of literary texts in American history. This canonization reflects both sexual biases and cultural politics, and is at the expense of 'the other renaissance' in the 1850s which, in contrast to the works of the famous five—Emerson, Whitman, Thoreau, Melville, and Hawthorne—produced a text like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The other renaissance looked at the country and its democratic ideal from the other, less edifying side. Next, Lal demonstrates how valuable a resistant, feminist reading is for the purpose of discovering gaps and erasures in a text, along with their ideological import. Such a reading must reject biologism and concentrate on the ideological issues in all texts, whether by male or female authors. Finally, Lal describes the double oppression under which black American women live: they are victims not only because of their sex but also because of their skin. Their predicament overlaps that of their white sisters, but has also some distinct contours. Hence the importance of female bonding in the novels of Alice Walker and Toni Morrison. Hence also the value of a concept like womanism which values black people's African past and calls for 'an adoption of female power constituted from the real economic functioning of the black women.'

In her attempt to place the Modernist temper in relation to tradition in post-Independence Hindi and Urdu short fiction, Sukrita Paul Kumar argues that Modernism was much more than merely a break from the familiar function of language or the conventions of form. It was a necessary response by the artist to the new world which had come into being as a result of the revolution in man's perception itself. This artist had a heightened consciousness of the mutability of life as well as of the socio-historical disorientation all around him. He was a relativist and sceptic, suspicious of the old-fashioned realism, history, and absolutism. Indeed, if anything, his breaking away from the past was a blessing, for it made it possible for him to try innovations both in theme and technique. Also, Modernism enabled the writer to view himself as belonging to world literature rather than a national one. The historical situation in which the Indian writer wrote in the twentieth century made it easier for him to be receptive to alien cultures and ideas. Especially after 1947, the writer found it necessary to 'utilize' Modernism in order to tackle the rupture and crisis following the country's partition and partition riots. Modernism came here as a necessity, though it underwent several modifications even as it also influenced our writers' perceptions and modes of thought.

A less charitable view of Modernism in general and T.S. Eliot in particular is taken by Jaidev and Pankaj K. Singh in their twofold ideological deconstruction of 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.' On the one hand, the deliberately ambiguous 'you' in 'Let us go then, you and I' is deconstructed for its intolerable sexist bias against woman; on the other, the 'you' is interpreted as the common reader towards whom a number of strategies are employed, all aiming at diminishing and degrading this common reader. Accordingly, the 'meaning' motif in the poem is shown to be loaded against the possibility or even desirability of communication between the artist-singer and the audience. The audience is further demoralized by Eliot's allusions, echoes and parodies. The effort as such is to fetishize elitism, misanthropy and misogyny. All this is supposedly for the sake of culture and tradition which are both contradistinguished from praxis, history, the human significance of the literary past. Culture becomes a frieze in some imagined past; human beings, women, and the so-called uninitiated readers are dismissed as rubbish. And all social and moral concerns are debunked as unaesthetic. Ideologically, the poem is staunchly conservative, status-quoist, and elitist. Jaidev and Pankaj Singh object to fetishizing such aesthetic cannons as formalism and self-reflexivity because their implications for a poor Third World nation are alarming and harmful.

In contrast to the irreverence towards Eliot in the above-mentioned paper, A.K. Jha brings towards him a worshipful attitude. He finds in the poet's ideal of objectivity an Arnoldian touchstone for judging all poetry. Jha regards subjectivism in poetry as something acutely embarrassing as well as a disvalue. Poetry is not expression but objectification of one's subjective states and feelings. Interestingly, he also justifies the Modernist emphasis on technique and form largely because, he thinks, these reduce the chances of 'overdoing personal poetry.' Thus, while the confessional poets are punished for their failures to discover objective correlatives, their formalism and objectivising strategies, wherever these are evident, become their redeeming graces. This is perhaps why an unabashedly subjective poem like 'Daddy' comes in for a summary dismissal. Lowell is a decadent romantic, though whenever 'the subjective content of the poem bursts upon a variety of techniques,' his poetry improves. Obviously, Jha would like techniques to burst upon the subjective content; techniques save. Roethke thus is a better poet because he can introduce around his personal quest mythical, Biblical suggestions. Detachment similarly helps Snodgrass, Sexton, Adrienne Rich, and Berryman. Jha concludes that while the poets in the group are too idiosyncratic to be 'schooled' together, their confessionalism constitutes their Achilles' heel: 'It is rather rare to find in the poetry of the so-called confessional poets examples of the personal getting mastered to an objective, aesthetic end.'

Professor Margaret Chatterjee conceived the idea of this volume during her tenure as Director of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study. Her successor, Professor J.S. Grewal, has helped me a great deal with his advice and thoughtful suggestions. Valuable help also came from Dr Sukrita Paul Kumar, Dr T.N. Dhar, Mr Balwant Kumar, Mr V.P. Sharma, Mr Janesh Kapoor, Mr N.K. Maini, Mr A.K. Sharma, Mr S.A. Jabbar and Mr L.K. Das.

JAIDEV

Fictional Emotion and Belief

BIJOY H. BORUAH

In this paper I discuss the paradox of emotional response to fiction as elucidated and dealt with by Eva Schaper. I argue for the non-viability of Schaper's proposed solution.

THE ILLUSION OF A DOXASTIC CONFLICT

Schaper formulates the paradox by introducing the following two philosophical principles (with the qualification that whatever dispute there may be about them is irrelevant to this discussion):[1]

> In the general context of belief and emotional response, two things seem uncontroversial: (A) knowing entails believing, and (B) an emotional response presupposes some beliefs (whether true or false) about that to which one responds.[2]

Given these principles, fictional emotions appear paradoxical. If we know, of some characters in fiction, that they do not have their counterparts in real life and that the events in which they are caught up never occurred, then it follows, from (A), that we believe there actually is nothing to respond to. Knowing that *X* is fictional entails believing that *X* does not exist and never existed. And if there is no belief that *X* is undergoing something, or something is happening to *X* due to certain circumstances, then from (B), indirectly, it follows that I cannot feel any emotion towards *X*. Directly it follows from (B) that I can feel a particular emotion towards *X* only if I believe that *X* is in some condition which has the quality or character suitably related to the emotion. For instance, if my emotion directed towards *X* is sorrow or sadness, then it implies that I believe *X* to be a victim of some misfortune. Conversely, if there is nothing for me to form the appropriate belief about—in case, that is, I believe *X* to be fictitious and hence do not believe *X* to have suffered any misfortune—then I cannot rationally feel sad towards *X*. But paradoxically, sometimes I *do* respond to a fictional *X* with sadness when *X* is presented to me in theatres, novels, or paintings. So, apparently my emotional response to a fictional *X* violates principles (A) and (B). Emotional response to fiction seems to be in logical conflict with what we actually know and believe.

To avoid the conflict, Coleridge and others propose the theory that somehow our disbelief in fiction, which is a logical consequence of (A), has to be suspended. For only through such a suspension can the subject's mental attitude be transformed to yield to a frame of mind which can conform to the requirement specified by (B), if he is to be genuinely moved. But Schaper rightly questions exactly how the suspension of disbelief is supposed to work in the face of our explicit knowledge or belief that the object is unreal. How is it that a work of fiction can make us willingly suspend our disbelief in the reality of what is presented?

In order to be clear about the above, Schaper suggests that we first examine the notion of an ordinary suspension of belief or disbelief. Ordinarily, suspension of disbelief is accompanied by the corresponding suspension of the knowledge-claim about the object (or proposition about some state of affairs) disbelieved. For example, if yesterday I believed that there were a dozen eggs in the refrigerator and this belief was grounded in my knowing (remembering) that I had put twelve eggs in, the suspicion today that my unloyal wife might have given two eggs away to my next-door neighbour makes me not only suspend my belief but also my knowledge-claim, until I have had a chance to check the refrigerator. Similarly, my disbelieving that there were fewer than twelve eggs in the refrigerator is suspended on the suspicion that my wife may have given away two of them; and my corresponding knowledge-claim is also held in abeyance until I can confirm my suspicion.

But it seems that the suspension of disbelief in the sense explained above is not possible when we come to fictional characters and events. For in this case suspending disbelief in fiction is not supposed to be accompanied by a corresponding suspension of the knowledge-claim that what we are attending to is fictional. If a work of art is held to make us voluntarily suspend our disbelief in the reality of what is presented, and yet such disbelief is still entailed by our knowledge that we are dealing with persons and events that are not real, then, as Schaper points out, the following problem remains:

> Only if I suspend the disbelief in their reality can I reasonably be moved by what happens, and only if I hold on to their non-reality can I avoid becoming the native backwoodsman who jumps on to the stage trying to stop the characters in some Jacobean drama, say, from perpetrating their evil designs.[3]

Thus, if someone who feels fictional emotions is not to be construed as a naive backwoodsman, he must be held to hang on to the knowledge that he is dealing with fiction. But he cannot be regarded as knowing something which he does not believe, since that would violate principle (A). Therefore it seems that 'suspension of disbelief' can mean neither 'believing what he knows not to be the case' nor 'not believing what he knows to be the case.' In effect, the notion of the willing suspension of disbelief has no coherent application to the analysis of fictional emotions.

If our emotional response to fiction is not founded on the willing suspension of disbelief, could it be founded instead on what Henry H. Price called 'half-belief'?[4] Price emphasizes that being in a state of half-belief does not consist in a person's believing something in a guarded or qualified fashion; rather, it is a matter of exhibiting strong signs of believing a given proposition in certain contexts and disbelieving it in other contexts. For example, a man is said to be a half-believer of the basic propositions of Theism if 'on some occasions he acts, feels and thinks (draws inferences) in much the same way as a person who does believe these Theistic propositions [while] on other occasions he acts, feels and thinks in much the same way as a person who does not believe them, or even as a person would who had not heard of them at all.'[5] Other examples, indicated by Price, are superstitious beliefs, fantasies or delusions and some forms of aesthetic experience. Reading the last example Price writes that 'when [some people] become absorbed, as we say, in the novel or the play, the state they are in is not merely an absence of disbelief, but something more and something more positive. It is a state in which they almost believe (for the time being) that the events narrated by Sir Walter Scott did really happen as he describes them, or that Hamlet's father really was murdered by Hamlet's uncle. They do not quite believe it, but neither do they just refrain from disbelieving it.'[6]

Schaper dismisses Price's theory on the ground that if the concept of half-belief is to provide an explanation of fictional emotions, then the explanation is given 'on the level of semi-delusion.'[7] For half-belief is a state of mind which resembles belief but is not full belief. She adds: 'Hence it is the more naive or less hardheaded readers and listeners who get "carried away" by fictional happenings into a state resembling belief—apparently half-believing that they are really happening here and now, for only in that way can the emotional response be explained.'[8] Above all, Schaper is not convinced that the subject of a fictional emotion is in such a 'queer state'—a description given by Price himself—as half-belief.

Besides, if the subject actually were in a state of half-believing in (the reality of) fictions, then his mental state would be indistinguishable in psychological character from superstition or make-believe. For, as Schaper reports, in Price's account there is nothing to distinguish the psychological state of half-believing in aesthetic contexts from the state of half-believing something which is said to occur in religious attitudes, superstitions or children's make-believe attitudes. She also thinks that analyzing the nature of fictional emotions is by no means 'dealing with mild symptoms of mental derangement.'[9] In fact, she sees Price's discussion as merely taking us to the point where her own discussion began. As she writes: 'Thus a man is said to be moved by a performance of *Hamlet*, and his emotions are said to be genuine and not just pretended emotions, but at the same time they are said to be "not wholly serious". But if we ask what *that* amounts to, the only answer apparently is that they are not wholly serious simply because they are responses to *fiction*. And that leaves everything as it was before.'[10]

Getting back to where she started, Schaper wants to provide a new way of analyzing the belief-structure underlying fictional emotions. She aims to show that, given this new analysis, our response to fiction not only occurs in conformity with principles (A) and (B), but its occurrence is necessarily occasioned by our beliefs about fiction which we form in accordance with principle (A). She thinks that, if the structure of such responses is examined with due consideration of their complexity, it becomes clear that the beliefs they presuppose are not in conflict with the beliefs which result from our knowing that we are dealing with fictions. She thinks that, on the contrary,

> the beliefs which one holds about objects of our emotions in a play, a painting or a novel, and which are indeed presupposed by those emotions, are not only not in conflict with the beliefs we have about its being a novel or a play and so on that we are responding to, but can arise only because these latter beliefs are held in the first place.[11]

If Schaper is right, the alleged conflict between the belief that what we are attending to is fictional and the belief that some person is undergoing something in that fictional world is a result of misdescribing the complex structure of the concept of fiction as an object of our emotional appreciation. Indeed, it would follow that the beliefs about persons and events in a fictional world are not just compatible with the belief that they are all fictional; the former beliefs are made possible only if we have the latter beliefs. According to this account, my true belief that I am attending to a fictional work is what allows me to form those beliefs which are necessary to my being genuinely moved by the characters and the events in which they are caught up. In that case, what follows from (A) with regard to a fictional character or event forms the basis on which the beliefs required by (B) are generated and thereby some emotion is evoked.

Let us call beliefs about fiction, the beliefs required by principle (A), A-beliefs and beliefs necessarily involved in having an emotion, the beliefs required by principle (B), B-beliefs. Now let us examine more closely the relationship between A-beliefs and B-beliefs. It is not in spite of A-beliefs, but because of them, that our response can properly and reasonably be said to be directed towards, say, the unfolding of the fate of Desdemona, or the descent into the mine which occurs in Zola's *Germinal*. But what kind of belief is our B-belief about Desdemona's fate or the descent into the mine *in relation to* our A-belief that Desdemona is a fictional woman or the descent into the mine is a fictional event? And why is it still not true that our holding A-beliefs precludes the rational possibility of genuinely forming the relevant B-beliefs? Can the B-beliefs be treated as true beliefs once we adhere to the A-beliefs?

These questions about belief arise in the context of the general ontological distinction between reality and fiction. How can we preserve a unitary concept of belief when we simultaneously apply it to two ontologically different realms—the real and the fictional? How can I, for example, A-believe that there is no Prince of Denmark named 'Hamlet' in the real-world nation called 'Denmark' and, at the same time, B-belive that Hamelt loved Ophelia and hated his step-father, etc.? One might well doubt whether I really believe anything when I say that I B-believe that something is the case in the face of A-believing that such a thing is not really the case. Perhaps we are bootlegging the concept of belief when we apply it indiscriminately to both fictional and factual contexts.

Schaper anticipates such questions by drawing a distinction between what she terms 'first-order' beliefs and 'second-order' beliefs. A first-order belief is a belief which is entitled by the believer's knowledge that he is dealing with fiction. For example, to know that one is watching a fictional performance of *Hamlet* is to have a first-order belief that there is no counterpart of the character Hamlet in the actual world and that an actual man, such as Sir Lawrence Olivier, is acting the role of the Prince of Denmark in accordance with the conventions of fictional performance. Above all, a first-order belief about fiction is grounded in a proper understanding of the concept of a work of fiction. In other words, first-order beliefs are beliefs *about* fiction.

On the other hand, a second-order belief is a belief about characters and events *in* fiction—those beliefs which are necessarily involved in our genuine emotional response to the occurrences of the fictional world. For example, my belief that Lady Macbeth is plotting a murder, that Anna Karenina is in mental anguish, or that Othello is overtaken by jealousy, are second-order beliefs about Lady Macbeth, Anna Karenina and Othello and what they do or feel. These beliefs are not just necessary for our being able to respond to these characters and events; they are also needed for the understanding and appreciation of the respective stories.

Having made the above distinction, Schaper now wants to demonstrate that first-order beliefs, or for my purpose A-beliefs, and second-order beliefs, or for my purpose B-beliefs, are not at variance with one another, since the two are not beliefs of the same order or standpoint. Thus, to B-believe that Hamlet loves Ophelia is not to believe anything that goes against A-believing that *Hamlet* is a work of fiction. She argues that only if the B-belief is taken to involve existential commitment to the actual existence of Hamlet and Ophelia can it conflict with the A-belief that *Hamlet* is a work of fiction and that the characters Hamlet and Ophelia are fictional. But, she continues, it is a salient feature of second-order beliefs that they do not entail existential commitment to what they are about. And in this respect such beliefs are not unique, since there are other sorts of beliefs that share the same feature. To this effect he offers the following argument. 'The view that beliefs always involve commitment to the actual existence of that about which the belief is held conflicts not only with what we might feel we know about responding to fiction. It also conflicts in general with belief situations in which the issue of actual existence does not arise because the objects of such beliefs are, as the saying is, within somebody's intentionality.'[12] For example, she thinks that, if Ralph believes that the next child he hopes for will develop the aptitude of playing the piano, he believes in something without believing in its actual existence. The object of his belief is in the realm of possibility.

Given the above analysis of a second-order belief, Schaper thinks that questions such as 'How can you genuinely feel sorry for Anna Karenina if you believe that she is only a fictional woman?' no longer appear baffling. For we are not in a situation whereby we assert, in B-believing that Anna Karenina is drifting closer and closer to disaster, that she actually lives somewhere in this world undergoing certain misfortune, in contradiction of our A-believing that she is no more than a product of Tolstoy's fictive imagination.

Accordingly, she holds that second-order beliefs lend themselves to truth-conditional assessment. She thinks that 'they are not in Russellian fashion all uniformly false,'[13] nor are they immune to being either true or false. In fact, these beliefs can be true in much the same way that beliefs which entail existential commitment can be true, provided we judge their truth or falsity by reference to what is actually stated in the 'text' of the work. As Schaper writes: 'Second-order beliefs, like first-order variety, are either true or false. Within the context of what we know to be a play, a novel, a painting and so on we have a perfectly serviceable analogue to the space-time coordinates which ordinarily allow for the determination of the truth-value of declarative sentences. In this obvious sense, second-order beliefs are true or false according to whether they are correctly or incorrectly identified within the analogue.'[14]

It is important for Schaper to emphasize that second-order beliefs about fictional personages are sometimes *true* beliefs as opposed to *illusory* beliefs. For an illusory belief will not be the proper foundation for a fictional emotion; nor will it be appropriate to an appreciation of a work of fiction. The subject of such an emotional appreciation is not in any kind of delusive or mistaken state of mind. But what exactly is it about first-order beliefs which accounts for the generation of second-order beliefs? In the absence of an explicit argument on this question in Schaper's own account, I want to suggest that the answer lies in the peculiarity and uniqueness of the aesthetic attitude. It seems plausible to postulate that her overall theory embraces a theory of the aesthetic attitude. This theory is (roughly) that our aesthetic appreciation of a work of fiction presupposes our having first-order beliefs about the work, *and* that our having these beliefs is accompanied by the simultaneous realization of the aesthetic significance of the work. This realization, in turn, at once elicits the relevant second-order beliefs about the happenings of a fictional world. In this regard the aesthetic attitude is contrasted with the 'natural', non-aesthetic attitude, which we adopt when, for example, we observe a painted canvas as merely a combination of certain pigmented patterns, not as an artistic representation of a rainbow or the sky. Similarly, we would be looking non-aesthetically at a piece of writing merely as a descriptive account of something and not as a play or novel or poem; and we would be listening to a symphony not as a symphony but merely as a certain combination of sound patterns. The distinguishing feature is that adopting the aesthetic attitude involves a departure from the natural attitude to a level of thinking whereby aesthetic, as opposed to natural, beliefs are rationally formed.

To put the above point somewhat differently, implicit in first-order beliefs about a work of fiction is an invitation to adopt the aesthetic attitude towards the work. Once this is understood, second-order beliefs about what is depicted or delineated in the work issue in the mode of appropriate appreciation of the work. Schaper also reiterates that it would be wrong to view second-order beliefs as ultimately reducible to first-order beliefs. For example, my beliefs about Othello's maddening jealousy, Desdemona's tragic end, or Herod's presiding over a massacre in Giotto's fresco of *The Slaughterhouse of the Innocents*, are not reducible to my beliefs about some fictional sentences and what they mean, or about a canvas or a wall with pigments on it. On the contrary, my proper appreciation of the given work of fiction requires that there be these two orders of beliefs. To quote Schaper: 'Beliefs about colour patches on a canvas or a wall, words on a page, musical notes in a score, actors on a stage, are what first makes possible my beliefs about Herod, Anna Karenina or Richard III, for example, but, to repeat, my beliefs about these personages are not beliefs about a canvas or wall, words on a page, or actors on a stage. They are beliefs about the doings and sufferings of these characters.'[15] And I think Schaper would say that those who find first-order beliefs and second-order beliefs mutually conflicting confuse the aesthetic attitude with the natural attitude. The illusion of a conflict arises only because the fictional object or event is assessed by denuding it of its aesthetic garb.

LACUNA AND INEFFICACY

It seems to me that there are mainly two difficulties in Schaper's theory: the first is a lacuna in her theory, and the second relates to the theory's explanatory inefficacy. Let us begin with the lacuna.

What is of cardinal importance to the viability of Schaper's theory is the provision of a complete explanation of the subject's transition from a mental state governed by a first-order belief to a state governed by second-order beliefs. It is quite plausible to accept her contention that appropriate emotional responses to fictions are not possible without recognizing that one is dealing with works of fiction and, thus, believing that the contents of second-order beliefs have no literal analogues in the actual world. Granted this, the problem is whether having A-beliefs in itself constitutes a sufficient explanation of the actual psychological transition to a state of mind whereby the subject forms appropriate B-beliefs.

I want to argue that A-believing that one is dealing with fictions is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition of coming to B-believe, for example, that a character is going through the vicissitudes of his life in a fictional world. Being in a mental state conducive to the generation of B-beliefs is not a *direct* consequence of having A-beliefs, any more than being able to see things standing in front of onself in broad daylight is a *direct* consequence of having one's eyes wide open (for the person might be blind). For the transition from the state of mind governed by A-beliefs to a state involving relevant B-beliefs is attitudinal. Therefore some condition over and above the acquisition of A-beliefs must be included to explain the attitudinal shift. To be precise, my argument is that Schaper has given only a *logical* condition of the possibility of the transition; but we also need a *psychological* condition by which to explain how, in effect, that possibility is actualized—that is to say, how the leap is actually taken from first-order beliefs to an attitude governed by second-order beliefs. But given Schaper's position, without the mediation of some psychological process or act or attitude, second-order beliefs would have to be spontaneously generated.

Furthermore, the existence or persistence of second-order beliefs presupposes the simultaneous maintenance of the aesthetic attitude. It is the aesthetic attitude which so to speak endows these beliefs with the reality or efficacy that they are alleged to have. Seen from the vantage point of the non-aesthetic, natural attitude, these beliefs are either false or irrational. So it would seem that the adoption of the aesthetic attitude necessitates that the natural attitude be, in some sense, put in abeyance. Now, if second-order beliefs are really effective in arousing emotions towards fictional objects and events, we do succeed in keeping the natural attitude away from interfering with our genuine psychological involvement with fictions. But the question then arises as to what exactly it is that explains our success in securing the aesthetic or second-order attitude. Is there not some specific mental act or attitude which lies behind this success? And is the aesthetic attitude itself not based on such a specific mental capacity?[16]

At this point I want to discuss the second difficulty, namely the explanatory inefficacy of Schaper's reformist theory. The problem in this case concerns the relationship between second-order beliefs and fictional emotions. In keeping with this view, Schaper maintains that fictional emotions are rationally explained by reference to second-order beliefs, just as factual emotions are explained by reference to first-order beliefs. She thinks that it is rational for us to feel such emotions because we appropriately believe something or other about the characters for whom we have feeling. Let us assume for the moment that this account constitutes, *prima facie*, a satisfactory refutation of my charge of irrationality.

Granted that second-order beliefs constitute reasons why fictional emotions are experienced, it must also be the case that they are causes of the occurrence of the emotions. For, in being a reason for the occurrence of an emotion, the appropriate belief must also play a causal role. But the question remains whether second-order beliefs, being what they are, can actually play a causal role in the generation of emotional experiences.

In order to answer the above question, it is necessary at first to determine precisely what the nature and status of second-order beliefs are as *beliefs*. To begin with, it is evident that these beliefs are only about what goes on in fictional worlds; otherwise they are, as Schaper herself admits, 'beliefs which are *as a matter of fact* false.'[17] Thus, the truth of these beliefs is specially secured—that is to say, they are true only in so far as they are about what happens in a fictional world. And it is not just that they are true because creators of works of fiction have invented certain characters and described them as caught up in certain events. Their truth also depends upon our *taking* the delineation as true to the fictionally projected world in question. This is so in that fictional beliefs and fictional truths are generated in part by our acceptance of the convention of fiction, which in turn occasions the shift of attitude from the natural to the aesthetic and enables us to view the projected world appropriately.

Thus it would be right to say that second-order beliefs are also specially secured or generated. But since their generation as well as persistence is founded on relevant first-order beliefs, second-order beliefs have a dependent, provisional or derivative status. And one important consequence of this is that they cease to be second-order beliefs or turn out to be false beliefs as soon as they are cut off from other beliefs on which they rest and by which they are bred.

How is it possible for second-order beliefs to exert the causal force required to elicit an emotion if they are no more than provisional assents to propositions about fictional phenomena? Being true only of fictional contexts, they are, strictly speaking, *counterfactual* beliefs, essentially contrasted with first-order, *factual* beliefs. However, they are not like other counterfactual beliefs which are attributed, for example, to dreamers who, in dreaming about something, form 'fictional' beliefs that they see something which is contrary to what the facts are during the period of their dreaming. Again, aesthetic counterfactual beliefs are also unlike fictional beliefs imputed to an insane person who imagines himself being someone else and thus believes himself to be the other person. In both the dream case and the case of pathological identification, the subjects hold fictional beliefs without being aware of the fictionality of their beliefs. The dreamer is lost in his dream world, and the insane person is entirely taken in by his compulsive fantasy.

The peculiarity of the two above-mentioned special cases is that here the beliefs, from the subjects' point of view, are not of a different order, elicited and sustained by some first-order beliefs. Rather, they are held by the subjects as first-order beliefs, much as people in normal circumstances hold factual beliefs. And it is precisely because these beliefs are deemed by the subjects to be factual beliefs that they are causally efficacious in bringing about emotional experiences. For it is part of the concept of a dream or madness of the extreme sort that the subject actually takes fictions for facts, which implies that his beliefs entail existential commitment.

The primary difference between aesthetic counterfactual beliefs and fictional beliefs involved in dreaming and psychosis, then, is that the distinction between fiction and reality does not collapse in the mind of the subject of the aesthetic case. In point of fact, the collapse of the distinction would mean, in Schaper's view, the impossibility of aesthetic appreciation. So, unlike the dreamer or the insane person, the subject of fictional emotions forms beliefs about objects and events in fiction while knowing that they are about fictions. In this sense second-order beliefs are *reflexive* beliefs. And the reflexive character of these beliefs is what, in part, accounts for the rationality of emotional responses to fictions.

The foregoing examination of the nature and status of aesthetic counterfactual beliefs seems to indicate that these beliefs cannot be causally potent on their own. They are causally efficacious only if their efficacy is derived from analogous first-order, factual beliefs. But how can any causative force be transferred to second-order beliefs when, following principle (A), they evolve and endure in the mind on the basis of, and in conjunction with, a first-order disbelief in proposition about their objects? How can second-order beliefs about fictional-world objects and events function in characteristically similar ways to factual beliefs about the happenings of the real world, if the former are formed knowingly and deliberately as *only* pertaining to fictions?

Thus, the conclusion seems to be forced on us that second-order beliefs are, in the ultimate analysis, tantamount to *putative* beliefs, stipulated by the convention of fiction. We are supposed to pretend to believe in fictions in a game of make-believe. But here we are said not to be deceived by our own pretence, in the way children are taken in by their make-believe game. Yet we are also said to be moved by what we only putatively believe to be the case. The crux of the problem is how putative or pretended beliefs ever succeed in evoking emotions towards putative objects in the way genuine emotions are evoked towards objects that are believed to be actual or possible. For example, if I know or believe that there is no leopard in this room to frighten me and then pretend to believe that there is one just behind me, I cannot rationally feel fear as a result of what I believe. It follows from the very nature of pretence that my act of pretending to believe in the existence of a leopard would, so to speak, insulate my mental state from being affected by fear.[18]

If the above argument is right, then it follows that second-order beliefs are not causally efficacious in producing fictional emotions. And fictional emotions are, in Schaper's view, genuine emotional responses towards fictional characters and events. But if these beliefs are bereft of the causative force that is needed to move us genuinely, then they are in essence mere recognitions on our part that, fictionally, something or other is the case. And mere recognition is not enough causally to explain why we feel emotion towards fiction.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Both Prichard and Vendler reject principle (A). See H.A. Prichard, *Knowledge and Perception* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); and Zeno Vendler, *Res Cogitas: An Essay in Rational Psychology* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1972).
2. Eva Schaper, 'Fiction and the Suspension of Disbelief,' *British Journal of Aesthetics*, XVIII, 31.
3. Ibid., 34.
4. H.H. Price, 'Half-Belief', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, supplementary volume, XXXVIII, 148-62.
5. Ibid., 158.
6. Ibid., 155.
7. Schaper, 36.
8. Ibid., 36-7.
9. Ibid., 37.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., 38.
12. Ibid., 41.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. In discussing and criticizing Schaper's theory, David Novitz addresses himself to this problem. His solution is that *imagination* is involved in our ability to make the required transition. 'Fiction, Imagination and Emotion,' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, XXXVIII, 279-88. It is also a central thesis of Roger Scruton that

aesthetic experience is founded on imagination. *Art and Imagination* (London: Methuen, 1974).

17. Schaper, 31.
18. As Errol Bedford says, 'Pretence is always insulated, as it were, from reality.' 'Emotions', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, LVII, 286.

Poetry and Truth in Sri Aurobindo

PABITRA KUMAR ROY

With Sri Aurobindo poetry has become self-conscious in the same manner in which reason had come to self-consciousness with Kant. Sri Aurobindo's thoughts about the possibility of poetry, its nature and office, are contained in such of his writings as *The Life Divine*, *The Future Poetry*, in the volume of *Letters* on poetry and literature as also in the *Letters* on *Savitri*. Valuable remarks are scattered through the chapter on 'The Suprarational Beauty' in *The Human Cycle*, and in other works like *The National Value of Art*, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, and *On the Veda*. Significant as well are his translations of the Upanisads and the Vedic pieces called the *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*. In all these writings Sri Aurobindo could be said to have laid the foundation of a new aesthetics, and more importantly, the hermeneutics of his own poetical achievements.

I

The problem of the connexion between poetry and truth becomes uniquely significant in Sri Aurobindo's case. It does not seem possible to separate his philosophy from his poetry. As in the case of Plato, so in that of Sri Aurobindo, image and argument are so deeply interfused that they can only be separated by doing violence to the nerve of the philosopher's intention. His writings illustrate Martin Heidegger's thesis about the intimate connexion between poetry and philosophy that 'All reflective thinking is poetic, and all poetry in turn is a kind of thinking.'[1] Thinking indeed poetry is, though Sri Aurobindo would add, it is 'intuitive thinking.'[2] There is another considerable opinion, which is voiced by Whitehead, namely that in a line and a half of poetry Euripides could compress the main philosophical problems which had tormented European thought.[3] One of the functions of philosophy, as much as of poetry, notes Whitehead, is search for meanings as yet unexperienced, beyond those stabilized in etymology and grammar. It is what Sri Aurobindo has done in his philosophical writings, and spoken of as the poet's capability of 'going beyond the word or image he uses or the forms of the thing he sees.'[4] In poetry, said Bhavabhuti, *Vacan artho anudhavati*.[5]

A closer look at the matter could now be taken. An apotheosis of language as poetry had already taken place in the Vedas, and it was expected that a disclosure of Being or Logos could be effected through the mystic employment of language, called *mantra*. This implied a self-consciousness on the part of language itself, its power of projecting itself beyond the bounds of sense, an attempt, as it were, to have the word incarnate in the word. The concept of *mantra* relates to the widening of human consciousness; it denotes the liberating word, which arises out of the depths of a widened consciousness. *Mantra*, to borrow an expression from Sri Aurobindo, is the all-puissant word. The notion sums up what words or language, if surcharged with self-vision, can do for the widening of being and consciousness.

Accordingly, *mantra* opens a dimension of poetry not only by expanding man's being and consciousness, but also by enhancing his capacity for delight. The ontology of what Sri Aurobindo calls the delight of existence is the Upanisadic term '*tadvanam*'[6] which translated means, 'The name of That is the Delight.' The ontological term *ananda* occurs in several of the Upanisads, but in the passages of the *Taittiriya* lies the clue to an aesthetics based on a sort of phenomenological Vedanta.

In a celebrated *Taittiriya* passage occurs a statement concerning the *raison d'etre* of the phenomenal existence, which is said to have been projected by the self of things, the infinite, indivisible, self-conscious existence. What is of importance is the occurrence of the term *ananda* along with its aesthetic cognate *rasa*, which is at once the essence of a thing and its aesthetic cognate, its taste. One of the most influential trends in classical Indian aesthetics bases its argument for the uniqueness of the aesthetic point of view on the concept of *rasa*. Its present-day followers are formidable in their significance, and Sri Aurobindo is one among them. The theory has received persuasive formulation in his hands in accordance with his philosophy of the life divine.

What makes a point of view aesthetic? Let us consider the following passage from Mircea Eliade: 'A work of art reveals its meanings only in so far as it is regarded as an autonomous creation, that is, in so far as we accept its mode of being that of an artistic creation and do not reduce it to one of its constituent elements. . . . Or to one of its subsequent uses.'[7] To accept a thing's mode of being is to grasp its essence, its *rasa*. Philosophers have sought to get clear about the notion of the mode of being of a thing apperceived aesthetically. I shall mention only three such cases.

There is Kant's notion of the beautiful as the object of disinterested satisfaction. The satisfaction is free, it does not involve any concept, and the object reveals itself only by referring to the feelings of the subject. The Kantian intentions get further clarified in Schopenhauer, for whom art is a manner of looking at, or even knowing things as they are in themselves. It is perceptive knowledge, a state of consciousness, freed from the machinations of the will, and stands beyond the scope of the principle of sufficient reason. That the aesthetic mode of apprehension or contemplation is, of itself, disinterested is maintained by Maritain also. Talking about the role of creative intuition in poetry he has spoken of poetry engaging the human self in its deepest resources, but not for the ego. The creative self reveals as well as sacrifices itself, in a saint-like fashion, to use a Christian metaphor. Or better still is the Rig Vedic analogy[8] of the Purusa sacrificing himself, and thereby bringing about not only the world at large, but also poetry.

There are, of course, certain assumptions, reacting from which one might object to the view that the aim of poetry is self-knowledge, in the substantival sense of the phrase. *A la* Christianity (St. John's Gospel, I. 1 In particular) the poet's mind may not be equated with Logos. In some of his intellectualist moods, Plato had maintained that the artist could never reach reality, he has to be contented with shadows. And the rationalists know only facts, only objective knowledge. But for Sri Aurobindo, the highest poetry is one with the knowledge of the self.

> A pure perception lent its lucent joy . . .
> A door parted . . .
> Releasing things unseized by earthly sense;
> A world unseen, unknown by outward mind
> Appeared in the silent spaces of the soul.[9]

The true creator of poetry is the soul. Sri Aurobindo's argument is that if poetry has to do anything at all with Truth, it should be revelatory of a large and powerful interpretative vision of Nature, life and man. To find 'the hidden Word'[10] is to lift the mortal mind into a greater air, and therein lies the meaning of the story of man. Genuine poetry, said Heidegger, is an establishment of Being by means of the word.

But how should this be possible? In order to see how poetry stands related to Truth, that is, how the inspired word discloses Being, one will have to look into the grammar of the delight of existence and Sri Aurobindo's ideas about the place of art in human life. Finally, his concept of poetry as an affirmation of Being would emerge into light.

II

Sri Aurobindo's philosophical views call for an adventure of consciousness. He understands evolution not in terms of becoming more and more saintly or more intelligent but in terms of becoming more and more conscious. The process does not end with man as he is now, rather it consists in a heightening of the force of consciousness in the manifest being, so that it may be raised into the greater intensity of what is still unmanifest. In short, an evolution of innate and latent but as yet unevolved powers of consciousness is the story of man's ascending fate.

Thus consciousness, for Sri Aurobindo, is the 'central secret,'[11] ultimately and essentially, it is an intrinsic, self-existent consciousness. Self-consciousness, in this case, is inseparable from its being a self-possession whose other name is self-delight.[12] It is an objectless[13] delight, and has been aptly called 'the delight of existence' interchangeably with 'the joy of existence' and 'the delight of being.'[14] This is the delight that 'eternally exists.'[15] The ontology of the delight of existence is axiomatic with Sri Aurobindo, and he has developed the thesis by way of an exegesis on the relevant Upanisadic passages. There is a further thesis no less important. It is the admission of another order of delight, namely, 'the delight of becoming'[16] in and through which the delight of being is said to enjoy a formative modality. The difference between the two grades of delight is that the one, the delight of being, is totally reflexive, while the other, the delight of becoming, is transitive. The latter always has, for itself, an object, which is in a way the cause of a delight experience. In the case of the former its own projected formations should serve as 'reflectors'[17] of the delighting consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo's metaphor of reflector appears to me significant in more than one way. The notion of objectless delight is a paradigm of disinterestedness and impersonality. A comparable case is the Mahayana account of a Bodhisattva's emotions, which have no object at all. His love, for example, does not owe its existence to the 'persons' on whom it is directed, but to an inward condition of the heart which is one of the manifestations of spiritual maturity. In the case of Kant's notion of disinterested satisfaction a similar note is struck, though the point is arrived at in the course of considering our satisfaction in the good and the pleasant. The contemplative feeling of the beautiful, independent as it is with regard to the existence of an object, is free since neither reason nor sensation forces our assent.

The area of agreement of such thoughts as those above with Sri Aurobindo's is no doubt large, yet what is distinctive is his proceeding from an ontology of being, and the dialectic of the two orders of delight mark for him the crux of the creative affair in art and literature. Sri Aurobindo explains the disinterestedness of the aesthetic delight in terms of the subsumption of the delight of becoming under that of being; when the alleged causes of delight are transformed into reflectors, one enters the state of experiencing 'objectless' delight, for which the other name is 'impersonality' or 'disinterestedness'. The point is that the view that the aesthetic feeling is disinterested should require, on Sri Aurobindo's part, spelling out a metaphysics of the self. And when that is done, it remains only a matter to be verified by creative experience that the creative self attains, however temporarily, to its original nature, and feels 'all delight of Being as one's own delight of being.'[18] To put it differently, the world is a conscious birth, a blaze of superconscient creativity which at the human level man has an inkling of in the task of poetic and artistic creation.

More than once Sri Aurobindo has drawn our attention to the subliminal[19] nature of the aesthetic inspiration. The subliminal soul in man, he says, is open to the universal delight. Man's surface existence, in his view, is a system of responses of which man is not the master. It is nervous and sensational, enslaved to habit, egoistic, and marked by a 'blank inability to seize the essence'[20] of things. *Rasa*, as Sri Aurobindo has it, is 'the essence of a thing and its taste.'[21] To look for the essence of a thing in its contact with oneself is the mark of delight, properly so-called. But when, instead of seeking the essence of the thing, one looks to one's nervous responses like pain, pleasure or indifference, *rasa* is apprehended in its dwarfed or perverted form. The delight of being is what *rasa* is. In the *Atharva Veda*[22] it is the immortal contemplative self, the spirit that is, that is delighted by the essence—*akamo dhiro amrta svayambh rasena triptah*. Disinterestedness and detachment in respect of the manner of one's knowing, feeling and nervous responses are the necessary conditions for seizing the essence of things. The chief value of poetry, and of all the finer arts, lies in the fact that they constitute an aesthetic device for developing the capacity for variable but universal delight in the reception of things. The delight of being is 'supra-aesthetic'[23] (Sri Aurobindo uses the term in its Greek sense as does Kant), whereas the reception of things at our surface existence is aesthetic. In art and poetry, through an imposed detachment from egoistic sensation and universal attitude, it becomes possible for one part of our self-divided nature to seize the essence of things. In the *Anguttara Nikaya* there is a talk about man's fair or lovely self (*Kalyanam atmanam*). Apropos of the Atharva Vedic idiom, one could say that the part of our self that delights or seizes the essence of this is immortal, just as *Vyanjana* is the immortal part of the meaning. Vi van tha[24] calls the tasting of the essence the cognate of the tasting of *Brahman*. The issue with Sri Aurobindo is a larger one. Rasa is more than the informing spirit of poetry (*vakyam rasatmakam kavyam*), it is the existential substrate of all that it is. The arts are its deflected image in aesthetic experience.

To return to the point about the value of poetry, poetry helps us absorb the 'shocks of experience'[25] in a cathartic way. In *The National Value of Art* Sri Aurobindo, commenting on the Aristotelian notion of *Katharsis* and assimilating it to that of *citta uddhi*, writes that art and poetry 'provide a field in which [the] claims of the animal ["the demands of body and the vital passions"] can be excluded and the emotions, working disinterestedly . . . can do the work of *Katharsis*, emotional purification. . . . *Citta uddhi*, the purification of the heart, is the appointed road by which man arrives at his higher fulfilment.'[26] The argument is that if it can be shown that art and poetry are powerful agents towards that end, their supreme importance is established. And Sri Aurobindo says, 'they are that and more than that.'[27]

III

Poetry and art, to paraphrase Sri Aurobindo, are developments by limitation out of the delight of existence. They are therefore capable of resolving themselves back into it through reverse processes. The analogy here holds just as it does between Mind and Supermind.[28] Hence, poetry is one of our ways of going beyond the ordinary firmaments of our consciousness. The *Rig Veda*[29] called it the path of the word, *suvrktim*. The dialectical development of the delights becoming into the delight of being is possible if the subliminal is brought to replace, what is called, the desire soul. 'The artist and the poet do it when they seek the rasa of the universal from the aesthetic emotion or from the physical line from the mental form of beauty or from the inner sense and power alike of that from which the ordinary man turns away and of that to which he is attached by sense of pleasure.'[30] I have allowed myself this quotation simply because the passage perspicuously states the process of psychological transubstantiation that occurs in the wake of the artistic mode of apprehension.

The point that is made is this: artistic apprehension ushers in a change in consciousness, and hence, the thesis is parasitic upon Sri Aurobindo's concept of mind or his critique of mental operations. According to him, human mind reaches beyond itself, since mind is 'a power of Ignorance seeking for Truth'[31] and in order that it may fulfil itself, human mind, by its acts of self-exceeding, links itself with higher grades of consciousness. The passage then is from the Mind in the Ignorance to the Mind in knowledge.

There are two marks of going beyond the given range or scale of mind, impersonality and universality, to exceed the personal ego, and non-limitation by the habitual limiting point of view. These two mark off aesthetic experience just as they do any spiritual one. Spirituality of an experience consists in the fact that in and through it one discovers one's self, which is said to be characterized by absoluteness of conscious existence. The absoluteness implies freedom or 'self-possession' and delight. It is free in the sense that it is not bound either by desire, or even by desirelessness of conscious existence, and is a creative or self-experience activity, which has the centre of its being in self-delight. Accordingly, it enjoys issuing forth, in endless forms, the fundamental fact of its existence. Delight and freedom are the two attributes of its self-expression. Now if that be the nature of our real self, then the delight of existence is, or ought to be, our real response in all situations. This is the demand of the new aesthetics. If it be possible to discover the real nature of self as the self-delight of being or conscious existence, then the habitual mode of our living could be altered. This is the most liberating part of Sri Aurobindo's thesis. With the widening of consciousness there occurs an expansion of aesthetic values. That this could be so necessarily is because of the important fact that beauty is an integral attribute of the supermind. And since art and poetry go a long way towards discovering man's authentic self, aesthetic culture is a part, a very important part indeed, of spiritual experience. Art is man's lien on the Absolute.

IV

Corresponding to the planes of consciousness there are planes of expression marked by impersonality and universality in varying degrees. 'The intellect is not the poet, the artist, the creator within us; creation comes by a suprarational influx of light and power.'[32] And Sri Aurobindo talks 'of unsealed vision'[33] of the poet. The poet's is the 'vision-mind'[34] or 'seeing mind.'[35] With the operations of such a mind as that the poet is capable of figuring and embodying in words the intuition of things. In Sri Aurobindo's terms, the imagination is 'the highest point of mental seership.'[36] The status and functions of the faculty of imagination in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy may be briefly stated. Imagination, he says, is a supplementary power of the mind, and functions to extract from things obvious and visible the things that are not obvious and visible. It is the mind's way of summoning possibilities, and does receive a figure of truth. Hence, its power is not radically illusory. The mental imagination, by virtue of its figuring 'the "may be" or "might be"s of the Infinite'[37] can transform itself into 'truth imagination'[38] as, of course, the mind ascends towards the truth-consciousness. To use Sri Aurobindo's distinction between the powers of manifesting and discovering, one might say that the mental imagination has to discover the unknown, while the truth-consciousness alone is capable of manifesting the known. Given the function of the mental imagination as a mediating power between the actualities of the surface existence and the possibilities of the higher grades of consciousness, it is now relevant to make a further statement: since poetry operates through the imagination, it is capable of getting the discovered possibilities of Being incarnated into language. Poetry houses Being as grasped through the imaginative operations of the mind. It should also be taken into account that Sri Aurobindo has distinguished a four-fold gradation of the planes of experience as have acted so far in the world's literature on a few occasions; higher mind, illumined mind, intuition and overmind, the creative intelligence besides. Whatever may have been the grade of consciousness at work behind the creations of beauty, what is important is the fact that the delight has always been a figure of the delight of being. And since this is so, the highest achievements in poetry, by an inspired use of significant and interpretative form, function to unseal the doors of the spirit.

Sri Aurobindo's contribution to the theory of poetry as *mantra* is argued in the following manner: 'If the . . . Overmind power . . . could come down into the mind and entirely transform its action, then,' he says, 'no doubt there might be greater poetry written than any that man has yet achieved.'[39] The viability of the argument follows from the dialectics of the two orders of delight, those of being and becoming; and the capacity of the overmental intervention. *Mantra* is the poetry of the Overmind. It is marked by four characteristics: 'the mystery of the inevitable word, the supreme rhythm, the absolute significance and the absolute utterance.'[40]

It should further be noted that the Overmind occupies a special place in Sri Aurobindo's aesthetics. In it we have, as he says, a firm foundation of the experience of a universal beauty and delight. The Overmind aesthesis grasps at once the essence and taste of things in their purity. Poetry is thus rescued from the contingency of the special grace of the artistic consciousness and limitation of delight and beauty to the field of art. The Overmind is the source of the genius. This point was hinted at by Kant when he said that the genius is beyond the rules of discursive operations of the mind. The Overmind consciousness is an integral experience, an experience of the whole being, compared to which our experiences are partial. It responds to all things in such a manner that beauty and truth do not fall apart in the overmental consciousness. That there can be an aesthetic response to truth also is only overmentally possible, because the Overmind 'sees and thinks and creates in masses, . . . reunites separated things, [and] reconciles opposites,'[41] and hence, 'The poet also can be a seeker and lover of beauty.' And 'it is his vision of its [truth's] beauty, its power, his thrilled reception of it, his joy in it that he tries to convey by an utmost perfection in word and rhythm.'[42] It is on the basis of the overmental experience that the full import of the notion of the delight of being can be realized. Poetry and Truth could be wedded together for 'the poet who is also a Rishi.'[43] Poetry of this genre would be the living shape of the bliss of Brahman, the full manifestation of the Logos. *Mantra* is poetry per se, the rest is literature.

There appears to be much confusion regarding Sri Aurobindo's notion of poetry as *mantra*. Sri Aurobindo may be taken as inclined to the view that poetry is the highest form of art, just as the French romantics, from Baudelaire to Valery, held that music was the name of aesthetic perfection. There is a difference between Sri Aurobindo's idea of the language of poetry and that of the French romantics represented by Valery. Sri Aurobindo's concept of language is closer to Heidegger's if we are to believe J.N. Mohanty.[44] The point is that, for Sri Aurobindo, the language of poetry is revelatory of consciousness, and if that be so, the evolution of consciousness would be revealed in poetry; further, if consciousness evolves towards seerhood, poetry likewise would become *mantra*-like. This is the kernel of Sri Aurobindo's thesis that the future poetry is *mantra*.

One does not need to bring in this context Sri Aurobindo's own poetical creations in order to evaluate the merits of his thesis. What needs to be seen is that his idea of poetry as *mantra* requires a metaphysical scheme to back it up. And this may be the case. His evolutionary philosophy contributes to the viability both of his theory of poetry, and of his idea of art.

It should further be noticed that *mantra* is not a commendatory term for Sri Aurobindo. To say that future poetry is *mantra* is not always to imply that it is going to be better poetry than ever. *Mantra* designates the poetry of a different taste and feel, which tries to seize the Absolute in shapes that pass.[45]

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, tr. Stambaugh, (New York, 1971), p. 136.
2. *Letters of Sri Aurobindo, Third Series*, (Bombay, 1946), p. 42. Henceforth *L*.
3. A.N. Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 227-8.
4. *The Future Poetry* (Pondichery, 1953), p. 48.
5. *Uttara-rama-carita*, I, x.
6. *Kena Upanisad*, IV. 6.
7. 'History of Religions and a New Humanism' in Mircea Eliade, ed., *History of Religions*, Vol. I (Chicago, 1961), p. 4.
8. Rig Veda, X. 9.9.
9. *Savitri*, Centenary Edition (Pondicherry, 1971), pp. 26-7.
10. Ibid., p. 313.
11. *The Life Divine*, (New York, 1940), p. 902. Henceforth *L.D.*
12. *L.D.*, p. 87.
13. *L.D.*, p. 93.
14. *L.D.*, p. 909.
15. *L.D.*, p. 94.
16. *L.D.*, p. 93.
17. *Loc. cit.*
18. *L.D.*, p. 909.
19. Sri Aurobindo uses the term 'subliminal' in the sense of a consciousness larger than what he calls the surface existence.
20. *L.D.*, p. 101.
21. *Loc. cit.*

22. *Atharva* Veda, X. 4, 44.
23. *L.*, p. 127, 'the overmind aesthesis'. See also p. 101.
24. *Sahitya Darpana*, III. 2-3.
25. *L.D.*, p. 102.
26. *The National Value of Art*, 1970, p. 13.
27. *Loc. cit.*
28. *L.D.*, p. 115.
29. *Rig Veda*, X. 30.1
30. *L.D.*, p. 206.
31. *L.D.*, p. 250.
32. *The Human Cycle*, 1977, p. 128. Henceforth *H.C.*
33. *H.C.*, p. 130.
34. *L.D.*, p. 63.
35. *L.D.*, p. 302.
36. *L.D.*, p. 299.
37. *L.D.*, p. 391.
38. *L.D.*, p. 392.
39. *L.*, p. 120.
40. *L.*, p. 130.
41. *Loc. cit.*
42. *L.*, p. 129.
43. *L.*, p. 128.
44. Mohanty, 'Sri Aurobindo on Language,' in *Sri Aurobindo: Homage from Visva-Bharati* (Santiniketan, 1972).
45. Interested readers should look up Professor Sisir Kumar Ghose's 'Sri Aurobindo: Poet of Being' in Sri Aurobindo Circle, No. 36. There Professor Ghose has discussed the marks of Aurobindean poetry. Admirable also is Professor Ghose's *The Poetry of Sri Aurobindo* (Calcutta, 1969). Thanks are due to Professor Ghose for many fruitful suggestions in the writing of this paper.

Towards a Theory of the Novel of Colonial Consciousness

OM P. JUNEJA

Whatever their origin, all the novelists dealt with in this paper share a common condition which I call colonial consciousness. They also share a common language, English, the language of their erstwhile masters.

While Africa, India and the Caribbeans were under the British rule, the African Americans, argues Malcolm X, were 'colonized, enslaved, lynched, exploited, deceived, abused.'[1] John Bracey argues that 'the black America exists in a state of colonial subordination to the white America.'[2] Albert Memmi, in fact, dedicated the American edition of his book *The Colonizer and the Colonized* to 'the American Negro, also colonized.'[3] Similarly, Kenneth Clark maintains that 'the dark ghettos are social, political, educational and above all—economic colonies.'[4] Some other studies in this area also reveal that though historically the American Negro was not colonized as Asians, the West Indians or Africans were, the American system has always operated like an internal colony. The plight of the African American, therefore, has not been different from that of others who were colonized. If anything, it has been worse due to slavery, segregation and colour prejudice.

Based on the exploitation of natural and human resources in the colonized nation, colonialism perpetuates itself through oppression and aggression. As Sartre observes in his Introduction to Memmi's book: 'Oppression means, first of all, the oppressor's hatred for the oppressed' which creates 'a petrified ideology *that* devotes itself to regarding human beings as talking beasts.'[5] This, in turn, dehumanizes both the colonizer and the colonized. Aimé Césaire remarks:

> The colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as *an animal*, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform *himself* into an animal. . . . They thought they were only slaughtering Indians or Hindus, or South Sea Islanders, or Africans. They have in fact overthrown, one after another, the ramparts behind which European civilization could have developed freely.[6]

The system creates a myth of the colonizer and the colonized. The colonizer proposes an image of the colonized as lazy, inferior, wicked and even having a 'dependence complex.' Mannoni presents a psychological account of colonialism by advancing an opposition between Prospero, the archetypal colonizer, and Caliban, the archetypal colonized, in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. He reads 'inferiority complex' in Prospero and 'dependence complex' in Caliban. The Prospero-type white man has a 'pathological urge to dominate,' while the Caliban-type black man feels wholly dependent on the authority of his white master. Thus, according to Mannoni, there exists a master-servant bond between the colonizer and the colonized: 'Caliban does not complain of being exploited; he complains of being betrayed,' as he 'has fallen prey to the resentment which succeeds the breakdown of dependence.'[7]

Both Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire contradict Mannoni's thesis as it ignores the economic exploitation of the colonized and reduces colonialism 'to an encounter between two psychological types with complementary predispositions who, for a time at least, find their needs dovetailing tidily. *Psychologie de la colonisation*, these critics charge, made Caliban out to be an eager partner in his own colonization.'[8] Re-reading Mannoni on *The Tempest*, Césaire tried to demythify the tale. For him Prospero is 'the complete totalitarian' who signifies the enlightened European world's 'will to power.' He is also the man of cold reason and of methodological conquest. Césaire sees the play in terms of the civilized European world of Prospero coming face to face with the natural world of Caliban for the first time. He argues that as Caliban's link with the natural world is still intact, he can participate in a world of marvels which can be created by Prospero through his magic. Moreover, Caliban is also a rebel. Césaire, in fact, attempted to correct Mannoni by rewriting *The Tempest* as *Une tempête* for the Negro Theatre of Paris in 1969. Prospero in Césaire's play is 'the man of methodical conquest' who is a master of the contemporary technology of oppression. He is, in Caliban's phrase, the anti-natural. *Une tempête*, says Nixon, 'self-consciously counterpoises the materialist Prospero within animistic slave empowered by a culture that co-exists emphatically with nature.'[9]

This counterpoising always informs the dialectic of colonialism which has a vested interest in the economic and political exploitation of the colony. By circulating the myth of the inferiority of the colonized and getting it reinforced through the education system, the colonizer gets it internalized by the colonized. Once internalized, this myth acquires some reality which contributes to the portrayal of a selfhood to the colonized who now views himself through the mirror of the colonizer. The internalized myth of the inferiority of the colonized eats into the fabric of the social, religious and cultural life of the colonized.

> Colonial power produces the colonized as a fixed reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible. It resembles a form of narrative in which the productivity and circulation of subjects and signs are bound in a reformed and recognizable totality.[10]

Thus, having been thrown out of the history-making process, the colonized finally loses interest in his selfhood and accepts the myth of his intellectual, social, cultural, religious and even physical inferiority. As he is usually denied the attributes of citizenship like voting rights and the discharge of normal civic duties, the colonized accepts the passive roles assigned to him by the colonizer. Education, designed to serve the needs of the colonizer, helps maintain the status of the colonized. It further helps the colonizer in destroying the past of the colonized by changing the frame of reference of history from the colony to the colonizer's country. The colonizer distorts and disfigures the historical past of the colonized in such a way that it no longer serves any useful purpose. By changing the names of streets, putting up the statues of his own heroes, designing the buildings after the architecture of his home country, the colonizer attempts to obliterate everything from the memory of the colonized about his past and creates an antipathy for his own civilization and culture. The colonized now presumably no longer remembers anything of his past. He feels ashamed to remember it because of the distorted version which has been imposed on him. Even the folk tales of the colonized get corrupted in such a way that they no longer serve the purpose they otherwise serve in a dynamic society. The colonized is finally taught the use of another language. As Caliban says to Miranda: 'You taught me Language; and my profit on't/ Is I know how to curse; the red plague rid you,/ For learning me your language.' This happens, argues Memmi, because 'Colonial bilingualism is not just linguistic dualism.' It is a 'linguistic drama.'[11] The colonized, by acquiring the oppressor's language participates in two psychical and cultural realms which are in conflict with each other. Participation in conflicting worlds becomes an everyday reality making the colonized feel the inadequacy of his own social system, culture, race and language. In 1959 when there were no independent countries in the English-speaking Caribbean, George Lamming remarked in his *The Pleasures of Exile*: 'Prospero lives in the absolute certainty that language which is his gift to Caliban is the very prison in which Caliban's achievement will be realized and restricted. Caliban can never reach perfection, not even the perfection implicit in Miranda's privileged ignorance.'[12] A Third World writer, in the colonial situation, is discriminated against and branded 'a second-class speaker of his first language.'[13]

Family and religion (if not intruded upon already by the missionaries) act as the only refuge for the oppressed and humiliated colonized. Both these institutions, under these conditions, tend to become more formal and rigid. While the individual finds a retreat from the oppressor's world and also an escape from his failures in the outside world controlled by the colonizer in his family and religion, the feeling of group solidarity is released through religious rites by all the members of the group. This becomes a means of safeguarding the collective consciousness of the people. Thus the only two institutions of family and religion available to the colonized also get clacified and petrified resulting in blockage of the dynamics of social structure. This 'historical catalepsy of the colonized'[14] helps the colonizer in propagating and perpetuating the myth of his racial superiority. Thus, racism becomes both an ideology and a defence mechanism in the colonial situation as race is 'a trope of ultimate, irreducible difference between cultures, linguistic groups, or adherents of specific belief systems which—more often than not—also have fundamentally opposed economic interests.'[15] Racism, describing and inscribing differences of language, belief systems, artistic tradition, and gene pool, as well as all sorts of supposedly natural attributes such as rhythm, athletic ability, cerebration, usury, fidelity, etc., produces a racial culture based on hierarchical system that valorizes/devalorizes the above differences. Racism develops its own mythology, ideology and philosophy.

Frantz Fanon in his speech before the first Congress of Negro Writers and Artists in Paris in 1956 analyzed the relationship between racism and culture. He divides racism, a cultural element, into two categories: primitive and cultural. The primitive or vulgar racism finds its material basis in biology; superiority of a race becomes a matter of the size and shape of human skulls. Scientific arguments are put forward in support of physiological lobotomy of the African Negro. It is this type of racism which creates colour prejudice, too. Cultural racism is only a subtle and more refined form of primitive racism. In cultural racism the object is no longer the individual men but a certain form of existence. This racism, carried to its logical extent, makes the colonized hate his language, dress, techniques, value system, social institutions, historical past, religion and practically everything that is not connected with the colonizer. Thus, Fanon says, 'the social panorama' of the colonized 'is destructed, values are flaunted, crushed, emptied.'[16]

Colonialism, according to Fanon, usually does not aim at killing the native culture; it aims at 'a continued agony' rather than a total disappearance of the pre-existing culture. It aims at 'deculturation through the process of a systematic elimination of a *raison d'être* for the colonized.' By a kind of perverted logic it 'turns to the past of the oppressed people and distorts, disfigures and destroys it.'[17]

The culture of the colonized, thus, becomes closed and gets fixed in a situation which leaves in them no hope or desire to change their status. So, the colonist through various kinds of oppression like tortures, raids, collective liquidations, and fines breaks the colonized society but does not kill or destroy it completely. Through its economic, political, cultural and social exploitation, he makes it sick, calcified and petrified. Once a dynamic culture gets frozen, its social structure accepts no change. It tends to become non-flexible, rigid, formalistic, producing a new type of social character.

Elaborating his concept of social character, Erich Fromm says that it is 'the intermediary between the socio-economic structure and the ideas and ideals prevalent in a society. It is the intermediary in both directions from the ideas to the economic basis.'[18] This character is shared by most members of the same culture. It channelizes human energy for the purpose of a continued functioning of society by transmitting the required qualities into an inner drive. For example, the industrial society had to produce a social character in which necessity for work, for punctuality and for orderliness had to become inherent strivings. Similarly, the social character of the nineteenth-century middle-class was hoarding-oriented to help and perpetuate the capitalist system of economy. Social character also produces a particular kind of consciousness: 'It is an expression of social existence and is not determined by instinctual drives (in the case of a society) as psychoanalysis sees it. Marx, the architect of historical materialism, connected consciousness with the "concrete life of man." '[19] Being a social construct, consciousness is altered and shaped by colonialism.

Colonial consciousness has a hierarchical system of variables and constants dependent on each other. Racism, being a constant, is central to it. The variables include the historical past and its distortion which results in the loss and/or confusion of group and individual identities; colour prejudice; a caste or class system based on race or religion. Colonial consciousness, however, is a ' "double consciousness" as it is "double duty bound", at once a civilizing mission and a violent subjugating forced,'[20] in the case of the colonizer, and has a 'twoness' of constituting one's self through the eyes of the others in the case of the colonized.[21]

II

Writing in 1941, Mikhail Bakhtin called the novel a young, everchanging and developing genre. Bakhtin got so excited about it that he called it 'the leading hero in the drama of literary development in our time precisely because it best of all reflects the tendencies of a new world still in the making; it is, after all, the only genre born of this new world and in total affinity with it.'[22]

All other literary forms, according to Bakhtin, were formed during the eras of 'closed and deaf monoglossia.' The novel, in contrast, emerged and matured when 'polyglossia' replaced the European world monoglossia during the Renaissance, particularly when the European man became a polyglot both internally and externally. The novel thus took the literary leadership in the new world born after the Renaissance. This, however, does not mean that there was no novel in the ancient world. The novel before the Renaissance could not develop all its potential mainly because of the temporal perspective of the ancient society which had no real concept of the future. It was during the Renaissance that a reorientation occurred.

> In that era, the present (that is, a reality that was contemporaneous) for the first time began to sense itself not only as an incomplete continuation of the past, but as something like a new and heroic beginning. . . . It was in the Renaissance that the present first began to feel with great clarity and awareness an incomparably closer proximity and kinship to the future than to the past.[23]

It was at this time that there occurred a rupture in the history of European civilization as it emerged from a socially isolated and culturally insulated society into an international and interlingual relationship with the world. Europe became a multicultural and multilingual society both internally and externally. This was a decisive factor in the life and thought of Europe and helped in the development of the novel as a genre which is characterized by polyglossia.

Bakhtin finds three basic characteristics which distinguish the novel from other genres: its stylistic three-dimensionality which is linked with the multilanguaged consciousness realized in the novel; the radical change it affects in the temporal coordinates of the literary image; and the new zone of the maximal contact with the present in all its open-endedness. Bakhtin values the novel for its 'spirit of process and inconclusiveness.'[24] The novel is a 'process' and not a product. It is thus better qualified to represent reality and represents it more deeply, more essentially and more sensitively than any other genre. Bakhtin thus makes a case for the novel as a genre which has been different from the beginning—always developing, never complete. Being plastic in nature, it is not canonic: 'It is even examining itself in a zone of direct contact with developing reality.' It keeps no epic distance between the image of man and real life.

Theory, warns Bakhtin, has always dealt with already completed genres like epic and tragedy. 'Faced with the problem of the novel, genre theory must submit to radical restructuring' as it has so far not moved out of the Aristotelian formulations. Contemplating on the logic of genre in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin states that 'a genre possesses its own organic logic' which 'is not abstract logic.'

> For this reason it is important to know the possible generic sources of a given author, the literary and generic atmosphere in which his creative work was realized. The more complete and concrete our knowledge of an author's *generic contacts*, the deeper can we penetrate the peculiar features of his generic form and the more correctly can we understand the interrelationships, within it, of tradition and innovation.[25]

Thus, keeping his moorings in literature as literature, Bakhtin, on the one hand, locates literature within the literary, ideological and socio-economic environment and, on the other, rejects both moribund Formalism and vulgar Marxism.

Discussing the problems of Dostoevsky's poetics, Bakhtin develops the concept of 'polyphony' which he believes would provide a multi-centredness to human life. The novel, he argues, is the most polyphonic of all the forms of literature, because it possesses 'a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousness, [and] a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels. . . . a plurality of consciousness, with equal rights and each with its own world.'[26] Written in a highly flexible form of prose, the novel, more than any other form, has the potential of speaking a multitude of voices other than the author's or the reader's. It is in this multi-voicedness in which Dostoevsky excels that he has created a fundamentally new novelistic genre.

Another quality that Bakhtin admires in Dostoevsky is his dialogic imagination which structures his novels as great dialogues: 'Within this great dialogues could be heard, illuminating it and thickening its texture, the compositionally expressed dialogues of the heroes; ultimately, dialogue penetrates within, into every word of the novel, making it double-voiced.'[27] It is this plurality of equal ideological positions and extreme heterogeneity of material that makes Dostoevsky a great novelist. His novels cannot be viewed from the monologic understanding of the unity of style. A Dostoevsky novel is 'multistyled or styleless.'[28] Clashing of contradictory accents in every word is an essential feature of his novel: 'a co-existence of a plurality of voices which do not fuse into a single consciousness but rather exist on different registers generating dialogical dynamism among themselves'[29] defines Dostoevsky's poetics.

Bakhtin develops the concept of heteroglossia to explain the notion of competing languages and discourses in a text. Robert Stam sees it as referring to 'the dialogically interrelated speech practices operative in a given society at a given moment, wherein the idioms of different classes, races, genders, generations and locales compete for ascendancy. It refers further to the shifting stratifications of language into professional jargons (lawyers, doctors, academics), generic discourses (melodrama, comedy) bureaucratic lingos, popular slangs along with specific languages of cultural praxis.'[30]

The languages which compose heteroglossia, according to Bakhtin, are bounded by the 'verbal-ideological belief systems.' It is represented by various forms of conceptualizing social experience, each marked by its own tonalities, meanings and values. Though a language community shares a language, different segments of that community live that language diversely as each segment shapes its own characteristic meaning. 'The role of artistic text is not to represent real life "existents" but rather to stage the conflicts inherent in heteroglossia, i.e. the coincidences and competitions of languages and discourses.'[31] For Bakhtin, thus, culture is the site of social struggle, as cultural processes are intimately linked to social relations. This social struggle is located in language. Heteroglossia characterizes a social community and language becomes the space of confrontation of differently oriented social accents. Hence, diverse socio-linguistic consciousnesses fight it out in the terrain of language: 'While the dominant class strives to make the sign "uni-accented" and endowed with an eternal, supra-class character, the oppressed, especially when they are conscious of their oppression, strive to deploy language for their own liberation.'[32]

It is in this space of confrontation of differently oriented social accents and of diverse socio-linguistic consciousnesses that the novel of colonial consciousness is born. It has its being in a co-existence of plurality of voices which do not and cannot by their very nature fuse into a single consciousness but rather exist on different registers and generate dialogical dynamism. Heteroglossia, polyphony and dialogism form the cardinal points of this genre which, by its very nature, operates on the double consciousness of writing the African American, African English, Caribbean English, or Indian English novel. W. E. B. DuBois, the African-American ideologue, captures this state of being in his memorable 1903 statement.

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in an amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts,

two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body whose dogged strength keeps it from being torn asunder.[33]

Abdul JanMohamed formulates this in terms of a binary or 'Manichean' code of recognition which underlines colonialism's domination of the Other. This code consists of a series of fixed oppositions such as self/other, white/black, good/evil, rationality/sensuality, civilization/savagery, and subject/object. The code of binary opposition valorizing the colonizer allows him to situate the other in his own ideological metaphysical system, and enables him to rationalize cultural differences in a hierarchical system to be decoded by the Manichean master code pronouncing the 'putative superiority' of the colonizer's culture over the 'supposed inferiority' of that of the colonized. Thus, the colonized can never be identified with the colonizer, leaving no ground for the meeting of the colonizer and the colonized. At the base of this Manichean code, argues JanMohamed, is the perception of racial difference influenced by economic motives.

JanMohamed postulates two phases of colonialism: dominant and hegemonic. In the 'dominant' phase which starts with the establishment of a colony and ends near its independence, the natives are under a direct military and bureaucratic control of the colonizer: 'during this phase the "consent" of the native is primarily passive and direct.'[34] The native is not subjugated, although his land is. His culture also remains fairly integrated because the colonizer labels both the native and his culture savage. 'By contrast, in the hegemonic phase (or neocolonialism) the natives accept a version of the colonizers' entire system of values, attitudes, morality, institutions, and more important, mode of production.'[35] By the time a colony is independent, the colonized internalizes all the social attitudes, mores, democratic institutions, law, etc. of the colonizer.

Constituting one's self through the eyes of others, or measuring one's soul by the tape of others, or writing oneself in the tradition of other—is the problematic of the representation of the colonial self. This is the case with Naipaul. The discourses and institutions of English literature provided him with a dim and refracted light and gave him an 'alien vision.'

> It diminished my own and did not give me the courage to do a single thing like mentioning the name of a Port of Spain street. . . . It helps in most practical ways to have a tradition. . . . The English language was mine; the tradition was not.[36]

Writing in a tradition not one's own and in a language one's own only by acquisition or education constitutes the colonial self in its 'twoness,' in its ambivalence which forms the core of the novel of colonial consciousness.

Ambivalence is at the heart of colonial presence, split as it is between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference.

> It is this ambivalence that makes the boundaries of colonial 'positionality'—the division of self/other—and the question of colonial power—

> the differentiation of colonizer/colonized—different from both the Hegelian master-slave dialectic or the phenomenological projection of Otherness. It is a *différance* produced within the act of enunciation as a specifically colonial articulation of those two disproportionate sites of colonial discourse and power: the colonial scene as the invention of historicity, mastery, mimesis or as the 'other Scene' of *Entstellung*, displacement, fantasy, psychic defence, and an 'open' textuality. Such a dis-play of difference produces a mode of authority that is agnostic (rather than antagonistic). Its discriminatory effects are visible in those split subjects of the racist stereotype—the simian Negro, the effeminate Asiatic male—which ambivalently fix identity as the fantasy of difference. To recognize the *différance* of the colonial presence is to realise that the colonial text occupies that space of double inscription, hallowed—no, hollowed—by Jacques Derrida.[37]

Because of the ambivalence of the colonial presence, the colonial text bears the double inscription of both being hallowed and hollow at the same time. This happens because dominance is achieved through 'a process of disapproval that denies the *différance* of the colonial power.' The strategy of disavowal creates chaos in the colonist discourse of evolutionism and thus produces 'a process of splitting as the condition of subjection: a discrimination between the mother culture and its bastards, the self and its doubles, where the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different—a mutation, a hybrid.'[38]

A hybrid, thus, becomes 'the sign of the productivity of colonial power' which may no more be interested in the noisy command of the colonial or the silent repression of the native tradition because 'the colonial hybrid is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire, making its objects . . . a negative transparency.'[39] Hybridity as formulated by Bhabha is a negative transparency which cannot produce a mirror image. Instead, it produces a representation of the colonial self 'that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal so that other "denied" knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority—the rules of recognition.'[40] Hybridity thus is 'at once a mode of appropriation and of resistance' and turns discrimination into assertion: 'the insignia of authority becomes a mask, a mockery.'[41]

Bhabha asserts a third choice in the well-known Fanon formulation of 'turn white or disappear' when he says: 'There is the more ambivalent, third choice; camouflage, mimicry, black skin/white masks.'[42] Bhabha argues that 'to represent the colonial subject is to conceive of the subject of difference of an other history and an other culture.'[43] This representation requires ending the collision of historicism and realism, the critical canon that prioritizes the Leavisian Universalism for the production of discourse sited in literary criticism, overlooking the differences of class, gender, race and the political and historical contradictions present in the struggle for hegemony. The Leavisian discourse valorizes a specific literary cultural practice to establish an aesthetic autonomy under the guise of pure criticism and pretends to speak for everyone, thus trying to constitute a monologic discourse of hegemonic formations. Such a discourse must be interrogated for its politics of inclusion/exclusion.

Hence the questions that Michel Foucault would like to ask regarding the marginalization of literary production from the erstwhile colonies. Who has the right to speak or write? What are the appropriate forms for their utterance to take? While analysing the relationship between power and knowledge, Foucault also asks: who is speaking to whom on whose behalf, in what context? Asking such questions obviously means entering in another discourse, the discourse of difference which should help us form a critical canon which recognizes these differences rather than obliterates them to look for a Universal aesthetic.

Frederic Jameson, analysing the significance of the ideological imperative in his *The Political Unconscious*, argues that the narrative is a socially symbolic act: 'Genres therefore are essentially literary institutions or social contracts between a writer and a specific public whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artifact.'[44] He thus negates the Leavisian Universal aesthetic principle by relating the text to the context. Genres, or for that matter intellectual disciplines, are all discursive practices and have a significant relation to socio-political institutions as they are always historically and socially positioned and constituted.

All discursive practices, including genres, are linked to power and social domination, says Foucault. In every society discourses are controlled, selected, organized and distributed in specific ways. Discourse is a series of discursive events arranged in a discontinuous series. It is to be studied in relation to power and also as a form of power which creates and maintains social divisions and yet subverts them. In 'The Order of Discourse,' Foucault asserts that 'discourse is the power which is to be seized,'[45] for the effects of a discourse depend upon its usage and manipulations.

Hence, when Homi Bhabha questions the representation of the colonial self by Leavisian Universalism, he is suggesting an aesthetic of difference—an alternative logic for its study. Framed in this way, the colonial self situates itself not just as the Other, it constitutes a contestatory discourse that positions itself as the protagonist of a literature of resistance within the conventions, though marginally so, of the dominant discourse.

One of the ways of examining resistance is to look at it as a counter-effect to networks of power. Taking such a view of resistance would be giving it a universalistic dimension in favour of colonialism. A more radical recontextualization of the theory of resistance would be to examine it with reference to specific societies. Resistance in these societies, therefore, can be looked upon as 'a matter for the enlarging and clarification of human consciousness. Freedom is a matter of being able to "see through" and to challenge the condition that divert living subjects from a real understanding of their interest and their conditions of existence.'[46] Resistance literature in such societies formulates itself in a concept of counter-discourse or, to use JanMohamed's phrase, 'a counter-hegemonic discourse.'[47]

Barbara Godard quotes Barbara Harlow who in her book *Resistance Literature* identifies resistance writing on the basis of the following marks: heterogeneity, fractured genres, polymorphous subjects, borderland sites. Harlow asserts that resistance narratives are produced as a politicised challenge to conventional literary standards. These texts test and contest the limits of a genre or discursive practice. Resistance narratives, to Godard, are examples of heteroglossia because of their composite forms as historical documents, ideological analyses, and visions of future possibilities.[48]

Thus resistance literature (which is what the novel of colonial consciousness is at its initial stages) draws attention to itself and to literature in general as a political and politicised activity. Immediate and direct involvement in a struggle against ascendant or dominant forms of ideological and cultural productions is the task it stakes out for itself. Chinua Achebe therefore would like to become a teacher of his people through his novels and tell them that they are not historyless and that they have a 'past with all its imperfections [which] was not one night of savagery from which the European acting on God's behalf delivered them.'[49] Novel-writing for him is an act of atonement for his past and also the 'ritual return and homage of a prodigal son.'[50]

Wole Soyinka in a recent essay calls novel-writing race-retrieval and sees it as an essential job for a post-colonial writer.

> It involves, very simply, the conscious activity of recovering what has been hidden, lost, repressed, denigrated, or indeed simply denied by ourselves—yes, by ourselves also—but definitely by the conquerors of our people and their Eurocentric bias of thought and relationships.[51]

Race-retrieval, Soyinka feels, is necessary because colonialism places entire peoples outside history. This sort of existence has a purpose 'for it makes them neutered objects on the whole tabula rasa, the clean slate of the mind, the text of the master race—cultural, economic, religious and so on.' This, according to Soyinka, leads to a logical resistance counterstrategy of the nationalist variety under the colonial rule. The situation in most African countries needs a double retrieval 'first from the colonial deniers of his past but also, second from the black neocolonial deniers of his immediate past and present.'[52] This becomes the target of his attack in *The Interpreters*.

The political and politicised nature of resistance literature, to quote JanMohamed, makes this political engagement 'co-terminus with formal experimentation.'

> Even though an African may adopt the formal characteristic of English fiction, his rendition of colonial experience will vary dramatically from that of European not only because of the actual differences in experience, but also because of his antagonistic attitude toward colonialist literature.[53]

This experimentation and innovation is neither a formalist nor a postmodern project, although it has similarities with both. Warning against the postmodernist/poststructuralist hegemonic appropriations of the post-colonial cultures, Helen Tiffin remarks:

> It is ironic that the label of 'postmodern' is increasingly being applied hegemonically, to the cultures and texts outside Europe, assimilating post-colonial works whose political orientations and experimental formulations have been deliberately designed to counteract such European appropriations, and it might be argued, have themselves provided the cultural base and formative colonial experience which European philosophies have drawn in their apparent radicalisation of linguistic philosophy.[54]

Both modernism and colonialism, though different in historical origins, theoretical assumptions and political motivations, share the common strategies of moving away from realist representation, refusal of closure, exposure of politics of metaphor, interrogation of forms, rehabilitation of allegory and an attack on binary structuration of concept and language. While postmodernism has its origin in the crisis of authority vested in Euro-American cultural institutions having monocultural thinking with universalist claims in the latter half of this century, the post-colonial perspective appropriates this crisis as the erosion of that former colonial self in which one's own identity may be created and recuperated. For the post-colonial writer it is 'a process, a state of continual becoming in which authority and domination of any kind is impossible to sustain.' Hence, according to Tiffin, 'the current textual and theoretical revolution does not represent a crisis of authority, but enables creativity and restitution.'[55]

It is in this spirit of restitution/retrieval of the colonial self that the writer of the novel of colonial consciousness has a date with history as this 'master narrative' seeks to contain and confine the self-interpretation for him. History, till recently, was largely a European construct and written by the colonizer (at least in the European languages) primarily because of its historical consciousness.

In order to situate itself in the contestatory space of history, the novel of colonial consciousness challenges the master narrative. In India, Africa, the South Pacific regions, and the indigenous peoples of North America, Australia and New Zealand, informs Tiffin, the challenge came from the metaphysical systems of these cultures which provide an alternative perspective, another logic. In the case of the Caribbeans, African-Americans and Canadians, Australians and New Zealanders of European origins, who have no metaphysical system except the European, the writers resort to subversion of history through 'the counter culture of imagination,' to use Michael Dash's phrase. She calls attention to two positions: (a) 'Against History' in the case of India, Africa, etc.; and (b) 'Dis/Mantling Narrative' in the Caribbeans, etc. While the counter-cultural strategies 'Against History' challenge the master narrative ;with their own cultural/metaphysical systems to resist the ficto-historical containment by the European episteme, the 'Dis/Mantling Narrative' strategies promote polyphony, eschew fixity, monocentrism and closure through the 'counter culture of the imagination.' In the first case, history is retrieved by puncturing the master narrative with the help of an alternative logic, another ontology and epistemology, as is done by Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*, a text set against the European interpretations of Africa in which it was turned into anthropological and ethnological material annihilating the materiality of its cultures and people.

> In *Things Fall Apart* Western historicizing is kept at bay while the complexity and communal destiny of culture through proverbs, seasonality, festivals, rituals, multitheism and power-balancing and power-sharing are established. Simultaneously this serves in each of its facets, to comment on a British system of theological exclusivity, ethnocentrism and hierarchical structuration.[56]

Similarly, Raja Rao employs 'Puranic' techniques in his novels. In *Kanthapura* he employs the techniques of *Sthala Purana*—a legendary history of Sanskrit narratology. He not only subverts the form of the historical novel, but extends the limits of the individualistic novel to express the consciousness of the whole village in the collective 'we' of the narrative voice of Achakka, the old woman narrator. History for her is not a linear progression of events in a chronological order or retelling of great events, but a poetic awakening of the people who figure in these events and of the gods and the goddesses who bless them in absentia. India's Freedom Movement in the 1920s for her, therefore, becomes a reenactment of the Ravana-Sita-Rama myth and also the myth of the Devi. Raja Rao converts history into the myth of a demon's vanquishing by a goddess and renders the intrusion of British history of colonialism 'illusory' by introducing metaphysical dimensions in the temporal narrative.

There being no retrieval or a recuperable system in the Dis/Mantling Narrative, the historical space is tested and contested by proposing an antisystem which situates history in a 'redefinable present rather than in an irrevocably interpreted past.'[57] George Lamming's *Natives of My Person* and the novels of Wilson Harris, Tiffin says, serve to illustrate these strategies.

Alice Walker in *The Color Purple* creates a counter culture of the imagination by making Celie write letters to God, a 'shadow confidant' to whom she can neither mail her letters nor convey her thoughts, leave alone sharing her feelings and emotions. Thus, dis/mantling the epistolary narrative discourse in Celie's idiolect, Walker proposes an anti-system for examining the history of African American womanhood in the USA. Embedded in the African American folk art tradition of their survival culture, she names it the 'womanist process.'[58] Womanism, according to Walker, is a tradition in which the black American women, despite their heavy oppression, expressed their creativity in such crafts as gardening, cooking and quilting. The art of quilting, for example, allowed them to satisfy their creative urge in bits and pieces of waste material to create new designs. Quilting for Walker signifies the two-way process of art: economy and functionalism. Alice Walker captures the spirit of this womanist process by using the epistolary style in *The Color Purple*. . . The distinct and original narrative tone of the novel approximates it to the oral code of the vernacular idiom of the South. This dis/mantling of the epistolary narrative discourse by an African American teenager situates the history of the black womanhood in the present.

Earl Lovelace, similarly, dis/mantles the carnivalistic discourse in *The Dragon Can't Dance*. Here the history of the Trinidadians is decarnivalized in the life of the failed rebels who evolve a religion of laziness, neglect, stupidity and waste. Written in the spirit of Carnival, the novel dis/mantles the Western carnivalistic view of the historylessness of the islands. By suberting the carnivalistic categories of ambivalence, profanation, eccentricity, paired imaging, etc., Lovelace in this novel celebrates the survival culture of the once colonized. Aldrick Prospect dancing the dragon locates himself in the history of his people who have a sense of 'miracle and manners.'[59]

Allegorical writing for creating the counter culture of the imagination has also become quite popular with some post-colonial writers. Allegory is used for transcending the master code of history so as to revise, reappropriate, or reinterpret history as a concept.

> The binocular lens of allegory refocuses our concept of history as fixed monument into a concept of history as the creation of a discursive practice, and in doing so it opens history, fiction's 'other' to the possibility of transformation.[60]

Fiction here is counterposed as the 'other' of history because both are discursive practices subject to questions of authorship and also because both require an act of reading before they can have meaning. The centrality of the reader in both demands from him a binocular vision for a depth perception of history being allegorized. For example, Lamming's *Natives of My Person* allegorizes colonial history as the present-day reality and argues that nothing has changed over time. It re-enacts colonial history in the form of a middle-passage slave ship, the Reconnaissance. In the novel, argues Slemon, the colonisers' ship and its crew are 'allegorically representative not only of the entire imperial endeavour but also of the post-colonial world . . . the world, ironically, that they are physically unable to reach in the narrative action of the text.'[61]

Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* is both allegorical and mythical. It tells the story of the mythical 'Great Indian Family' of Shantanu and Satyavati interpolated with the history of British colonialism and of post-colonial India. Ved Vyas, the narrator and mythical author of the *Mahabharata*, becomes V.V. here. The contemporary commentator tells Ganapati, the scribe, 'Brahm, in my epic I shall tell of past, present and future, of existence and passing, of efflorescence and decay, of death and rebirth; of what is, of what was, of what should have been.'[62] The two thousand years old tale of the *Mahabharata* is told in twentieth-century terms. Presenting a binocular vision of a historian and a mythographer, the novelist parodies and allegorizes such historical figures as Nehru (Dhritarashtra), Muhamadali (Karna), Mahatma Gandhi (Bhishma or Gangaji). Tharoor digs at Nehru when he keeps the Foreign Affairs Ministry along with the Prime Ministership: ' "No", Dhritarashtra said. "You know, Kanika, that is the one ministry I have always wanted to hold myself. Foreign affairs the only subject where it doesn't matter that I can't see: everything else requires an empiricism of which I'm incapable. You understand?" '[63] Similarly, India's defeat in the Sino-Indian war is the subject in Chapter 97.

> *How could you have allowed it to happen?* It was a question many of us in the Kaurva Party could not resist asking Dhritarashtra when the Chakras invaded, tossed our ill-fed, ill-clad, ill-shod *jawans* contemptuously aside and inexorably erased the Big Mac Line. By the time our panic-stricken response could be organized the war was over; the Chakras had announced a unilateral cease-fire that we were in no condition to reject. In a few humiliating days they had achieved every one of their objectives. ...They even shook the credibility of Dhritarashtra's non-alignment, for our blind Prime Minister panicked enough to welcome the offer of a squadron of fighter planes and pilots from the superpower whose alliances he had earlier consistently spurned. It was not, Ganapathi, a time at which we covered ourselves in glory. (p. 304)

Thus, through this process of demystification of history, Ved Vyas, the narrator, and Ganapati, the scribe, participate in the Puranic history-writing project in which events are viewed in their totality and not in their fragmented time frame. Dhritarashtra, at the end of the chapter, walks 'into the foliage of the woods' to breathe his last. The narrator removes his dark glasses from his lifeless eyes: 'He belonged to the ages, but the instruments of his failure did not.'

Tharoor dis/mantles the historical frames to counterpose fiction as the 'other' of history. By obliterating the line between myth and history, the novelist exposes the falsity of the conventional Western fact/fiction opposition. Narrating the story through a mythical narrator, Ved Vyas who every now and then changes himself into V. V., Tharoor punctures the temporal frames both of history and myth, fact and fiction. As the narrator dictates the story to Ganapathi, another mythical character, *The Great Indian Novel* questions the very notion of telling a story because no story can be told finally. The narrator tells Ganapathi: 'Have I, you seem to be asking, come to the end of my story? How forgetful you are: it was just the other day I told you stories never end, they just continue somewhere else. In the hills and the plains, the hearths and hearts of India.'[64] The final sentence of the novel informs Ganapathi: 'Let us begin again.' And the novel ends with the sentence with which it began, thus establishing the circularity of the Kal Chakra, which goes on repeating, rendering history historyless, making fiction more real than fact, or establishing the fact that fact is, in fact, fiction.

This process of experimentation and innovation, an integral part of the novel of colonial consciousness, goes beyond the process of re-writing the history of its people. Wole Soyinka, for example, is interested in raising some questions, instead of answering them in *The Interpreters*. In order not to lead the reader to find the answers to the questions that he raises about Nigerian society in the novel, he uses cinematic narrative devices like flashbacks, split-screen, spotlight techniques of reprise, repeat and variation. It is a novel which 'experiments with the novel form by introducing structural principles from other art forms, from drama, oracy, or even classical music. Soyinka practises structural synaesthesia.'[65]

Similarly, Ngugi transforms the detective novel formula into an allegory of revolution in his *Petals of Blood*. The novel begins with a murder and the reader gets the impression that he is reading a detective story. Eventually though, what he discovers is that there is no individual murderer. A whole community, a class, has gone to murder the nation. Ngugi thus turns an essentially non-political conservative form into a political morality. In order to accommodate the multi-cultural and pluralistic character of the teeming millions of India, Salman Rushdie adopts a multiple point-of-view technique in *Midnight's Children* so as to make India a character.

> But the story is told in a manner designed to echo, as closely as my abilities allowed, the Indian talent for non-stop self-regeneration. This is why the narrative constantly throws up stories, why it 'teems.' The form—multitudinous, hinting at the infinite possibilities of the country—is the optimistic counterweight to Saleem's personal tragedy.[66]

The novel of colonial consciousness thus hybridizes the novelistic form as also the English language. As all literary forms have ideological functions, they are reappropriated and refashioned in different social and cultural contexts, though the generic message of earlier social formations also persists and produces sedimented structures, complicating the pressure on the genre for ideological change. Hybridization thus exhibits the dis-identification of a counter-discourse though these forms constitute what Said has called 'new objects of knowledge,'[67] which require new discursive practices to analyse them.

Bakhtin's formulations on dialogism in *The Dialogic Imagination* can help us evolve new discursive practices to form a theory of the representation of the colonial self. Bakhtin formulates it in the contrast that he develops between monologic speech, totalizing and authoritative, which 'cannot be represented (because) it is only transmitted' and dialogism which is characteristic of the novel, represented speech in which the words of others are put into quotation marks, qualified and externalized, both represented and representing. In this clash of the represented and the representing, the word is shown incomplete and conditional.[68] Such hybridization of speech genres appropriates and reworks the other's discourse redistributively either in a mode of symbolic dissidence or resistance—a mode of disidentification. Thus, in this double articulation 'discursive practices are both connected and disassociated: the logic of subject-identity that posits one subject for one discourse for one site or practice is confounded in this heterogeneity and hybridization.'[69]

The novel of colonial consciousness thematizes this representation or 're-accentuation' by rewriting the conventions of representing the colonized and the discursive formations of this representation, as self in Bakhtinian terms is constituted by acquiring the ambient languages and discourses of the world. 'This self, in this sense, is a kind of hybrid sum of institutional and discursive practices bearing on family, class, gender, race, generation and locale.'[70] It is in this space of clash and confrontation that this novel has its being.

The writer of this novel mediates between two worlds: European and native in colonial situation and / or modern and traditional in post-colonial situation. Thus, heir to two cultures, two world-views and generally two or more languages, he chooses to write in the language of his erstwhile masters. Consciousness is linguistic and social and is therefore an objective fact and a social force. When translated into outer, public speech, it therefore 'has its capacity to act on the world.'[71] The novel of colonial consciousness being the outer speech of this consciousness and the inner speech of the novelist contests the genre on the following grounds:

1. a sense of community which locates the centre of this novel in community rather than in the consciousness of the individual, as, for example, in *Petals of Blood* or *Kanthapura;*
2. a preference for folk, oral or alternative tradition, as in the oral mode of Ernest Gains's *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pitts* or in the folklore element in Amos Tutola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard;*
3. nativization of the English language and the novelistic form to accommodate the native idiom and narrative techniques, as in Desani's *All About H. Hatterr* or Achebe's *Arrow of God;*
4. prevalence of a political and politicised post-colonial polyphonic discourse of difference celebrating heterogeneity and heteroglossia; this novel generally has a date with the colonial past and history.

To conclude, the novel of colonial consciousness implies a socially situated and socially symbolic act. Its writer nativizes the English language by subversion and either hybridizes a literary form or uses it with a bichromatic lens of a bicultural/multicultural perspective. This novel refuses to be treated as anthropological/ethnological material as it celebrates ethnicity and difference, and abrogating English literature to appropriate it as 'english' literature.[72]

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Malcolm X quoted in John Bracey, ed., *Black Nationalism in America* (New York: Bobb-Merill Coy, 1970), p. 1414.
2. Bracey, p. Liii.
3. Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (New York: Orion Press, 1985).
4. Kenneth Clark quoted in Albert Wohsletter and Robert Wohsletter, 'The Third World Abroad and At Home,' *The Public Interest*, 14 (Winter 1969), 88-107.
5. Sartre in Memmi, p. xxxvii.
6. Aimé Césaire quoted in Ashish Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery Under Colonialism* (New Delhi: OUP, 1983), p. 30.
7. Octave Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonisation*, tran. P.

Powesland (New York: Prager, 1964), p. 106.
8. Rob Nixon, 'Caribbean and African Appropriations of *The Tempest,' Critical Inquiry*, 13 (Spring 1987), 564-65.
9. Ibid., 571.
10. Homi Bhabha, 'The Other Question: Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism,' in Frances Barker, et al, eds., *Literature, Politics and Theory* (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 156.
11. Memmi, p. 108.
12. *The Pleasures of Exile*, (1959; rpt. New York: Prager, 1984), p. 110.
13. Nixon, 568.
14. Memmi, p. 102.
15. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., 'Editor's Introduction: Writing "Race" and Difference It Makes,' *Critical Inquiry*, 12 (Autumn 1985), 5.
16. Frantz Fanon, 'Racism and Culture,' in *Black Poets and Prophets*, ed. Woodie King and Earl Anthony (New York: Mentor Books, 1972), pp 16-17.
17. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, tran. Constance Farrington (1963; rpt. New York: Mentor Books, 1969), p. 170.
18. Fromm, 'Individual and Social Character,' rpt. in Henrik M. Ruitenbeek, ed., *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary American Culture* (New York: Dell Books, 1969), p. 31.
19. Fromm, *The Crisis of Psycho-analysis* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), p. 152.
20. Homi Bhabha in Frances Barker, et al, p. 146.
21. W.E.B. Dubois, *The Soul of Black Folk* (1953; rpt. New York: Millwood, 1973), p. 1.
22. M.M.Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel,' *The Dialogic Imagination*, tran. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holoquist (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 7.
23. Ibid., p. 40.
24. Ibid., p. 7.
25. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, tran. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 157.
26. Ibid., p. 6.
27. Ibid., p. 40.
28. Ibid., p. 15.
29. Robert Stam, 'Mikhail Bakhtin and Left Cultural Critique,' in Ann Kaplan, ed., *Postmodernism and Its Discontents* (New York: Verso, 1988), pp 128-29.
30. Ibid., p.121.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., pp. 122-23.
33. DuBois, p. 1.
34. Abdul R. JanMohamed, 'The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonial Literature,' *Critical Inquiry*, 12 (Autumn 1985), 62.
35. Ibid.
36. V.S.Naipaul, 'Jasmine,' *Times of India Supplement*, 4 June 1964.
37. Homi Bhabha, 'Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817,' *Critical Inquiry*, 12 (Autumn 1985), 150.
38. Ibid., 153.
39. Ibid., 154.
40. Ibid., 156.
41. Ibid., 162.

42. Ibid.
43. Bhabha, 'Representation and Colonial Text: A Critical Exploration of Some Forms of Mimeticism,' in Frank Gloversmith, ed., *The Theory of Reality* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1984).
44. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 106.
45. Foucault, 'The Order of Discourse,' in R Young, ed., *Untying the Text* (London: RKP, 1981), pp. 52-3. Cf. also Dominick La Capra: 'All discursive practices always have a significant relations to the socio-political institutions—a relation that becomes obvious and subject to sanctions once intellectual pursuits are formally organized in institutional disciplines.' *History and Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 140.
46. 'Introduction' to D. Miller, et al, eds. *Domination and Resistance* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 13.
47: Abdul R. JanMohamed, 'Colonialism and Minority Literature: Toward a Definition of a Counter Hegemonic Discourse,' *Boundary* 2 (1984), pp. 281-99.
48. Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987), pp. 75,99.
49. Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (London: Heinemann Education Books, 1975), pp. 44-5.
50. Ibid., p. 77.
51. Soyinka, 'Twice Bitten: The Fate of Africa's Culture Procedures,' *PMLA*, 105 (January 1990), 114.
52. Ibid.
53. JanMohamed quoted in Harlow, p. 106.
54. Helen Tiffin, 'Post-Colonialism, Post-Modernism and the Rehabilitation of Post-Colonial History,' *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 22 (1988), 170.
55. Ibid., 174.
56. Ibid.
57. Eva-Marie Kroller quoted in Ibid., 176.
58. Barbara Christian, 'The Black Woman Artist is Wayward,' in Hari Evans, ed., *Black Women Writers, 1950-1980* (New York: Anchor/Double, 1984), p. 469.
59. Earl Lovelace, *The Dragon Can't Dance* (Essex: Longmans House, 1979), p. 41.
60. Stephen Slemon, 'Post-Colonial Allegory and the Transformation of History,' *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 22 (1988), 161.
61. Ibid., 162.
62. Shashi Tharoor, *The Great Indian Novel* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1989), p. 18.
63. Ibid., p. 291.
64. Ibid., p. 418.
65. Echard Breitinger, 'Experiment in the Novel Form: Soyinka, Farah, Ngugi, Fugard,' *Journal of Narrative Technique*, 3 (1987), 98.
66. Rushdie, 'Imaginary Homelands,' *London Review of Books*, Oct. 1982, 18.
67. Said in Harlow, p. 116.
68. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 344-45.
69. Godard, p. 29.
70. Stam, p. 120.
71. Ibid.
72. Cf. Helen Tiffin: 'I use English (cap E) when referring to canonical English literature and english (small e) when referring to post-colonial literature written in English.' '"Lie Back and Think of England": Post-Colonial Literatures and the Academy,' in Hena Maes-Jelinek, et al, eds., *A Shaping of Connections* (Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1989), p. 126.

Postmodernist Fiction: The Limits of Reflexivity

SUZETTE HENKE

Few terms have aroused more perplexity and suspicion than the all-embracing label 'postmodern,' as applied over the last decades to art, architecture, literature and film. The term itself challenges the limits of intelligibility. Does it simply denote an historical period succeeding the Modernist movement of (roughly) 1914-1945? Does postmodernism suggest a reaction against the poetics of early twentieth-century Modernism through innovation and avant-garde techniques? Do postmodern writers purport to be 'moderner' than the moderns? And if so, at what point will artists and authors inaugurate a new post-postmodernist era to eclipse the self-reflexive praxis of contemporary aesthetics? For all too many people, the term 'postmodernism' has simply become a synonym for stylistic anarchy, denoting a hodgepodge of architectural, artistic, and discursive forms. What I would like to suggest is that literary postmodernism, at least, has its roots in much earlier discursive forms. It did not spring, fully grown, from the head of Ihab Hassan or Fredric Jameson.

The traditional history of the novel has always traced its origins to the realistic, semi-journalistic genre that developed in England in the eighteenth century through the narrative skills of Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding. Such writers, it was thought, were primarily concerned with the individual's interaction with other men and women in an ever-changing social environment. Ian Watt in *The Rise of the Novel* identifies the genre through its emphasis on 'formal realism'—a detailed delineation of time, place and character; an acceptance of epistemological premises of cause and effect; and the aim of photographic representation.

Critics like Watt, Leavis, and Georg Lukacs emphasize the ideals of formal realism and locate the flowering of the 'great tradition' of the novel in nineteenth-century England and France—with George Eliot, Jane Austen, Balzac and Flaubert. The criteria that such critics apply are, of course, those of verisimilitude. Their standards reflect a need for a 'full and authentic report of human experience' in the context of a social, cultural, moral and economic environment. As John Gardner insisted in his book *On Moral Fiction*, good writing should, at some level, be edifying and instructive; it should offer models of correct and morally acceptable behaviour.

There has always been, however, a second, more subversive and self-conscious literary tradition, co-existing with and even predating the 'great tradition' described by Leavis and Watt. In his book *Partial Magic*, Robert Alter tries to trace the history of this alternative tradition—playful, ludic, romantic, and self-conscious—from Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, through Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and Fielding's *Tom Jones*, towards its full modernist flowering in Joyce's *Ulysses* and Nabokov's *Pale Fire*. Alter argues that the novel has always contained within itself the seeds of a rich and playful postmodern form with virtually infinite possibilities of formal and linguistic innovation.

It is important to keep in mind that the 'dazzling literary contrivances' of postmodern literature were largely inherited from two great modernist writers whose work set the stage for contemporary innovation—James Joyce and William Faulkner. Both authors were initially realistic writers who moved into uncharted territory of radical experimentation. From scraps of realism and naturalistic detail, they fashioned brilliant aesthetic microcosms—worlds of words that exist, finally, as ends in themselves, independent of and in opposition to the social, economic, cultural and political context of their literary genesis.

Both Joyce and Faulkner changed the course of modern literature through their development of the stream-of-consciousness technique—an attempt to represent the inner workings of the mind in the fullness of imagistic perception. Faulkner indulged in radical experiments with time and duration, disrupting the narrative sequence of the story through temporally-fragmented interior monologues. *The Sound and the Fury* unfolds in the confused consciousness of an adult idiot, then shifts historical perspective in a narrative collage that forces the reader to reconstruct the temporal order of events. Joyce and Woolf both play with time and duration largely through the use of cinematic techniques of montage and 'flashback.' In fact, the 'Wandering Rocks' chapter of *Ulysses* and the whole of *Mrs. Dalloway* offer a paradigm for many of the ludic distortions of temporal and spatial representation in contemporary fiction.

Much more than Faulkner or even Woolf, Joyce incorporates into the novel innovative techniques of polyphony or 'many-voicedness,' organising a play of different narrative voices against themselves in the various parodies, musical intrusions, mock-styles, and dramatic fantasies of *Ulysses*. His writing provided a model for the free play of what Bakhtin called the dialogic imagination—for the incorporation of non-fictional modes of discourse into the wondrously farraginous and polytropic genre of the modern novel. *Ulysses* is an omnivorous, all-consuming art form exemplary of Bakhtin's 'heteroglossia'—a mixture of languages and forms of discourse heretofore thought inconsistent with fictional representation. Joyce is shameless in his authorial voracity. His fiction devours and assimilates all sorts of popular art forms, as well as arts and fragments from the context of turn-of-the-century Irish society—popular songs and ballads, newspaper advertisements, snippets from ladies' magazines, not to mention the entire heritage of European literature and philosophy, done by Joyce in a mocking, parodic, and highly comic mode.

Without question, Joyce offers major literary paradigms for the self-referential novel that has come to dominate avant-grade writing in America. Through ubiquitous word-play and punning, he provides a model of literary *paronomasia* and authenticates lexical exuberance. Certainly, *Finnegans Wake* provides a consummate example of self-referential fiction. A literary möbius strip, the *Wake* not only draws attention to itself as its own subject, but foregrounds its polysemic discourse in such a way as to reestablish both letter and *logos*, writing and the word as the central focal point of aesthetic interpretation.

With Joyce as an undeniable influence, there has been an increasing tendency for the American novel to become evermore conscious of itself as an aesthetic construct. As Robert Alter reminds us, the very notion of literary realism has always been 'a tantalizing contradiction in terms,' a notion 'qualified by the writer's awareness that fictions are never real things.'[1] From Vladimir Nabokov to John Barth, Robert Coover, and Thomas Pynchon, the postmodern American writer is increasingly preoccupied with the construction of fictions about fiction—what Linda Hutcheon calls 'Metafiction,' or 'fiction that includes within itself a commentary on its own narrative and linguistic identity.'[2]

Metafiction, or 'narcissistic narrative,' rejects the traditional split between process and product, between storytelling and the story told. Narcissistic narrative 'is process made visible.' The very 'point of metafiction is that it constitutes its own first critical commentary.'[3] As John Barth exclaims with mock exasperation in the parodic biography 'Life-Story': 'Another story about a writer writing a story! Another regress in infinitum! Who doesn't prefer art that at least overtly imitates something other than its own processes?'[4]

God-like in his creative authority over the text, the postmodern author draws on a plethora of possible worlds, some of which seem contiguous with the 'real world' as we know it, and others which deliberately transgress ontological boundaries. In the 'heterotopian zone' of fabulation, Brian McHale tells us, 'hallucinations and fantasies become real, metaphors become literal, the fictional worlds of the mass media—movies, comic books—thrust themselves into the midst of historical reality. The zone, in short, becomes plural. . . located nowhere but in the written text itself.'[5]

In creating discontinuous representations of possible worlds, postmodern writers often appropriate themes and strategies from fantasy and science fiction. The fantastic, says Todorov, '*hesitates* between natural and supernatural explanations, between the uncanny and the marvellous.'[6] Often, we are meant to be amazed by the routine nature of the paranormal or the miraculous, as in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* or Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

The postmodern writer may offer us an apocryphal version of history, as does Robert Coover in *The Public Burning* and Ishmael Reed in *Mumbo Jumbo* and *Flight to Canada*. Or he may choose to put his fictional fabulation *sous rature*, erasing his textual construct before our very eyes.

One of the most prominent trends in contemporary American literature is the fictional representation of a narrator engaged in the act of narration. The artist/protagonist is conscious of the way his story is being composed. The narrator and the narrated simultaneously occupy the foreground of the story and together constitute a new kind of protagonist. American novelists like Vladimir Nabokov and John Barth seem to be obsessed with storytelling as the subject-matter of their stories. As composition is foregrounded, the signifier becomes the signified; the novels virtually become stories about themselves.

Vladimir Nabokov, John Barth, Thomas Pynchon and Robert Coover all write themselves into the fictional world of their narratives. They deliberately blur the line of demarcation between fact and fiction and challenge the illusion of verisimilitude. The author may become a character in his own fictional world. Or we might, as in *Don Quixote*, encounter a fictional double of the book we are reading. (Andre Gide's *Les Faux-Monaveurs* and Barth's *Giles Goat-Boy*). The author might incorporate into his fiction characters from another book entirely (Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray*; Barth, *Funhouse*); or he might even borrow characters from earlier works he has written (Barth, *Chimera* and *Letters*; Beckett, *The Unnamable*).

One of the fathers of self-reflexive fiction in America is the Russian-born novelist Vladimir Nabokov, who appropriated from Joyce a ludic love of word-play and *paronomasia*, a delight in comic involution, opacity, and linguistic acrobatics. In his *Lectures on Literature* Nabokov praises Joyce as literary shape-shifter: 'At any moment Joyce can turn to all sorts of verbal tricks, to puns, transposition of words, verbal echoes, monstrous twinning of verbs, or the imitation of sounds.'[7] Nabokov particularly admired Joyce's skillful assimilation of non-novelistic modes. In all his work, Nabokov delights in a kind of self-reflexive 'mirror-play' that deliberately challenges realistic illusion. He writes himself into novels like *Lolita* and *Pnin*. And in the text of *Pale Fire*, he incorporates poetry and literary criticism into the very heart of his fictional text, offering us not only Shade's lugubrious poem and Kinbote's mad commentary, but a fictional foreword and index as well.

As Robert Alter observes, the 'self-conscious activity of *dédoublement* and the self-conscious device of the mirror, both of which. . . are everywhere in Nabokov's fiction, achieve a kind of apotheosis here. Reflections, real and illusory, accurate and distorted, straight-forward and magical, are absolutely ubiquitous.'[8] Zembla, the land of semblances that the megalomaniac Kinbote invents to rule over in his Commentary, is a realm of mirrors. Rather like some fabulous world of science-fiction fabrication, it seems almost built of glass and reflecting surfaces.'[9] The figure 8 on its side, the algebraic lemniscate, 'neatly diagrams the circular reflective relation of Commentary to Poem and Poem to Commentary,'[10] each mimicking and mimetically reflecting the self-referential, ludic and linguistically elusive revelation of the other in Nabokov's fiction.

The strange loop of metalepsis characterizes Nabokov's *Pale Fire* when, in the thousandth line of John Shade's poem of the same name, the author prophesies his own death, then is bumped off by the madman Gradus—known as Jack de Gray by the local asylum. But who is sane and who mad in this narrative? Surely the general madness of academic scholarship is parodied in the commentary and index of this self-reflexive novel, all the more metafictional in its narrator's veiled threat to abandon his erstwhile Zembian identity as Carolus Kingbot (C. Kinbote) and return in another incarnation as his own creator, Vladimir Nabokov: 'I may turn up yet, on another campus, as an old, happy, healthy, heterosexual Russian, a writer in exile, sans fame, sans future, sans audience, sans anything but his art.'[11] A real poet has tragically stumbled into the line of fire between a vicious maniac and a harmless one. Is the homosexual, vegetarian, narcissistic Professor Kinbote really insane? Or is Nabokov simply exposing the fabulative structure of his self-referential work of fiction?

If Nabokov tends to play with conventions of genre and literary stereotypes, John Barth delights in standing such conventions on their head. In the 'Frame-Tale' of *Funhouse*, Barth gives us a controlling metaphor of the Möbius-strip as stylistic paradigm generating the stories in the collection. The frame-tale consists of two pages with horizontal lettering in bold capitals: ONCE UPON A TIME THERE on the first page, and WAS A STORY THAT BEGAN on the second. The reader is instructed to 'Cut on the dotted line. Twist end once and fasten AB to ab, CD to cd.' The result will be a Möbius strip that reads: ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A STORY THAT BEGAN *ad infinitum*. The story just begun turns in upon its first words to indicate that its subject is going to be its own creative process. The narrative turns back upon itself in a gesture of ludic involution: its subject will be a fictional exploration of its own process of narrative generation. As the solipsistic narrator of 'Night-sea Journey' observes, 'One way or another, no matter which theory of our journey is correct, it's myself I address; to whom I rehearse as to a stranger our history and condition.'[12]

The 'night-sea journey' of life or of fictional creation is admittedly absurd: 'but here we swim, will-we-nil-we, against the flood, onward and upward, toward a shore that may not exist and couldn't be reached if it did.'[13] The tailed narrator of this tale is probably Barth's personification of a sperm, on his way to be 'one with Her' in the name of Love, in an act of conception that will give birth to Ambrose, the artist-hero of some of the following stories. The secret of Barth's water-message is that there *is* no message. There are only signifiers, words arranged on a page and creating their own autonomous reality. The narrator of 'Petition' admits that his petition-writing is 'futile perhaps, desperate certainly,' but that 'the alternative is madness.'[14] Many of Barth's artist-narrators are engaged in a kind of 'Scriptotherapy,' telling themselves stories that will enable them to cope with a confusing, hostile or intolerable reality.

In 'Lost in the Funhouse,' the adolescent narrator Ambrose can only experience life through the mediation of language. At the moment of sexual initiation by Magda in the 'Torture Chamber,' he feels nothing but an 'odd detatchment. . . . Strive as he might to be transported, he heard his mind take notes upon the scene: *This is what they call passion. I am experiencing it.*'[15]

In the Ambrose stories of *Lost in the Funhouse*, Barth provides us with an oddly convoluted, experimental *kunstlerroman*. He expresses parodic alarm at losing himself and his reader in the labyrinthine funhouse of fiction; whereas he is, in fact, the secret operator of the funhouse, deliberately decentring the narrative through radical subversions of literary convention. He refuses to observe the Aristotelian dramatic paradigm that he comically discusses under the name of Freitag's Triangle. In a mock effort to conclude the tale, Barth offers a romantic ending to the story; but that, too, is a failure, and the 'complication' proposed by Ambrose's incarceration in the factual/fictional funhouse is not resolved, but rather dispersed among several possible, equally unbelievable or unsatisfying endings. In one version of the story, Ambrose remains in the funhouse and meets the ghost of himself as an octogenarian genie or engineer of ludic games; in another, he escapes, marries Magda, and brings his own offspring to Ocean City for similar rites of adolescent initiation into the funhouse of fictional self-creation; in still another version of the tale, the characters simply decamp and return home, without having ventured into the labyrinthine spaces of the funhouse unconscious.

The whole point of Barth's funhouse fictions is that there *is* no point—no Aristotelian peripeteia, no climax, dénouement, or fictional closure. Narrative climax is infinitely deferred, broken up, fragmented, and disseminated. Sexual climax becomes a predominant metaphor that captures the long, tedious, ludic moments of foreplay abruptly terminated by the spasm of diving/dying: 'the diving would make a suitable literary symbol. . . . it was over in two seconds, after all that wait. Spring, pose, splash.'[16] Because Barth's fictions are self-referential, there *is* no climax or closure. We are thrust into a world of ontological peculiarity, where 'events apparently both do and do not happen, or in which the same event happens in two irreconcilably different ways.'[17]

Perhaps the most interesting trend in contemporary postmodern texts is towards the 'strange loop' phenomenon identified by Gérard Genette as *metalepsis*—a foregrounding of ontological dimensions of the text through recursive narrative embedding. One narrative level is 'nested' within another in a heterarchy which denies primacy to either. As in M.C. Escher's lithograph of Drawing Hands, the artist posits a 'multi-level structure in which there is no single "highest level." '[18]

Recursive strategies of narrative embedding are ubiquitous in postmodern fiction, which frequently disrupts ontological continuity by constructing multiple fabulations nested or stacked one within the other, 'as in a set of Chinese boxes or Russian babushka dolls.'[19] Or a 'representation may be embedded within itself, transforming a recursive structure into a structure *en abyme*.'[20] Using strategies of what Jean Ricardou calls 'variable reality', postmodern novels frequently effect a kind of literary *trompe-l'oeil*, 'deliberately misleading the reader into regarding an embedded, secondary world as the primary, diegetic world.'[21] Perhaps the most blatant example of such a 'variable reality' can be found in Thomas Pynchon's consummate postmodern text, *Gravity's Rainbow*, at the end of which the entire world of the novel 'is retroactively revealed to have been the world of a movie-within-the-novel, hypodiegetic rather than diegetic.'[22]

Pynchon is notorious for incorporating paracinematic techniques into all his fiction, so it is not surprising that *Gravity's Rainbow* turns out to be a textual representation of a movie which, in turn, represents reality. The film, after all, functions as a 'master-trope for control.' At the end of the novel, 'in a final, apocalyptic metalepsis, the rocket launched within the film-within-the-novel hangs poised above the theatre in which the film itself is being viewed.'[23] On the last page, Pynchon mocks his readership as he addresses us personally as 'old fans who've been always at the movies.'

Thomas Pynchon's characters are two-dimensional comic-book figures, caricatures of the superficial, flat cartoon personalities that inhabit the cinematic world of the author's imagination. As Tony Tanner explains, Pynchon has simply 'blown up' the 'very tenacious notion of the unique individual. . . . Character and identity are not stable in his fiction, and the wild names he gives his "characters". . . are a gesture against the tyranny of naming itself.'[24] Pynchon's general psychological model is not based on Freud or Jung, but on behavioral psychology. His characters have no depth at all. They are Watsonian beings, wild conglomerations of the forces of social conditioning that have moulded their personalities through a life-long barrage of fragmented, often misinterpreted stimuli.

Pynchon's primary paradigm is that of information theory, and his characters are like modules in a printed circuit: they convey messages and exist as the focal points of social and cultural encodings transmitted by their surrounding environment. Like Pavlovian dogs, they respond to a plethora of stimuli emitted by cultural conditioning. They are intertextual nodes of a grand, meaningless design—two-dimensional products of a culture that has largely dissolved into a mixed-media display of information that can never be rationally processed.

Slothrop's experiences in *Gravity's Rainbow* are predetermined by his early participation in clinical experiments in behavioral psychology. And Oedipa Mass, in *The Crying of Lot 49*, is obsessed with the need to make sense of all the different signs, clues, and covert communications which will somehow prove or disprove the verity of Inverarity's god-games and Silent Tristero's Empire. As Tony Tanner observes, Pynchon's 'paracinematic' characters 'move in a world of both too many and too few signs, too much data and too little information, too many texts but no reliable editions, and extreme overabundance of signifiers.'[25]

If Nabokov is the father of postmodern reflexivity, Thomas Pynchon and Robert Coover have playfully introduced the skill and complexity of an Escher lithograph into the game of metalepsis. Coover's story 'The Magic Poker' draws on Shakespeare's *The Tempest* for its model, but soon elaborates a panoply of mirror fictions that reflect, refract, and ludically distort the Renaissance paradigm. An island there is, and a Prospero-like narrator who claims god-like power over his fictive invention. 'I wander the island, inventing it,' he tells us. 'I make the sun for it, and trees. . . . But anything can happen.'[26] This god is also a vindictive dio boia, a diety who delights in destruction and defamation as much as narrative creation. He creates and disfigures, constructs and deconstructs. But the world of his making is fluid and shimmering, a world of variable realities. Chronology, for instance, is scrambled and indeterminate. A wealthy family once purchased the island and inhabited it. They inhabit it now, and tell their children a fairy tale about a princess and a poker. They were never on the island. With time, the fictive island acquires geographical status in another ontological dimension—to the surprise of the narrator, who claims to have created the two girls who visit the island (one of whom doubles as a fairy-tale princess). 'I have invented you, dear reader,' he insists. Has he? And in what sense?

'The Magic Poker' displays a looping structure of contiguous and intersecting ontological levels. In some ostensibly 'real' cosmos, two young women visit an abandoned island and explore its mansion. They find a poker and take it away. But that is only the beginning. The entire story replicates *The Tempest*, with Coover-like surrogates presiding. The Ariel figure, equipped with pipe and blue jacket, is, in certain renditions of the tale, a carnivalesque clown with 'barbered buttocks,' allied through lower-body poles with the hairy-ballocked Caliban archetype, the caretaker's son.

The paradigm of a fairy tale is subverted in its ludic inversions and materiality. The princess in distress has been thrice married and needs assistance in decanting her torso from its steel-girded golden trousers. Her pants prove impenetrable to the boldest knight's stout sword. Only the Magic Poker can poke her pants into a laminated puddle and, when the instrument is wielded by the Caliban figure, it effects a grotesque anti-fairy tale. The Frog-prince is killed, the princess doomed to widowhood.

Ontological levels are so intertwined that, at the end, the story's genre remains indeterminate. Is it fairy-tale or fabulation, realistic narrative or pure fantasy? Has a frog-prince expired, or was it merely a frog? Did Karen play grotesque, Amazonian games in the deserted family mansion, cavorting about with a green grand piano collapsing as she pounded its keys? Did an Ariel figure materialize through oral titillation, or dematerialize through the aegis of a fierce female embrace? Was the Poker/Prince real or imaginary? And can one make a distinction?

I am reminded here of Marianne Moore's description of poetry as imaginary frogs in real gardens. Or was it real frogs in imaginary gardens? At the end of this tale, 'a frog dies, a strange creature lies slain, a tanager sings.'[27] Is that slain creature Ariel, Caliban, or the Prospero-narrator?

A brash, intrusive, sometimes truculent narrator presides, but there are certain limitations to his power. He sounds Beckettian when he promises: 'Though you have more to face, and even more to suffer from me, this is in fact the last thing I shall say to you.' And yet he continues talking. 'But can the end be in the middle? Yes, yes, it always is.'[28] As the story exfoliates, the narrator etiolates: 'I am disappearing. You have no doubt noticed. Yes, and by some no doubt calculable formula of event and pagination.'[29] Has this strange creature, by the end, been slain by the god-like Coover?

'The Babysitter' is another example of Coover's metaleptic fiction, where variable realities circulate in a carnival of real, imagined, and televised violence. If Pynchon's writing is paracinematic, Coover's inaugurates a dialogic *paronomasia* of cultural static, the white noise of consumer culture that infiltrates and orchestrates Baudrillard's simulacrum model of postmodern experience. The mirror flickers: its images construct a separate ontological reality that both reflects and distorts individual sensation in a hyperbolic replication of the so-called 'real world.' The recursive structure of Coover's narrative implicates the nested collection of variable realities that construct our perception of contemporary culture and inscribe us into a consumer society where we ourselves are the commodities marketed. If we perceive the world refracted in a televised replication of itself, we are, in turn, conditioned to modes of perception visually reflected in the magic mirrors of film and TV. the media are held responsible, it seems, for the generation of a culture that is not only narcissistic, but scopophiliac. Its Freudian obsession is ubiquitous, its 'love of looking' everywhere commodified.

In Coover's story, each character is exposed both as voyeuristic subject and as specular object to the lascivious gaze of the Other. The scopophiliac gaze connotes mastery and determines all. Violence freely circulates through the inter-cutting of non-chronological film clips jumbled in Hitchcockian mélange. The un-named babysitter is the object of lust for her lecherous employer Harry, as well as for a boyfriend who is goaded, either in fantasy or in fact, into bathtub voyeurism and possible rape. The irony of Coover's fictional construction resides in its deployment of variable, contradictory realities whose ontological status remains indefinite. No single narrative is privileged as diegetic. A series of jump-cuts amalgamates ostensible fact, fantasy, and narrative fabulation. As in Borges' fiction, a number of contradictory, incompatible plots emerge, without concern for logical possibility. Harry Tucker fantasizes about his babysitter and does or does not enact his lecherous desires. Jimmy seems to bathe with the babysitter in infantile innocence, while his father entertains fantasies of a similar blissful immersion.

Images of violence flicker across a TV screen in shoot-em-up Westerns and lurid detective films. A kind of ludic violence erupts when the tots attack their sitter and tickle her as she rolls on the floor giggling. Rolled by Mark and Jack, she ceases to giggle; but the three are or are not exposed by Harry, who may or may not fall and hit his head on the bathroom sink. TV enacts a tummy-tightening scenario that excites the babysitter, who displays her own adolescent desires downward when she asks Jimmy to soap her back. 'You said I could watch!' (176) whines the female child Bitsy. She means the television, or maybe the bath; or maybe the adolescent groping that substitutes for sex. Television is her teacher in the register of violence and sexual brutality. She is conditioned to desire before she understands its voyeuristic charge. Her needs are determined by a commodified TV culture, and her eyes are being trained to an incipient but explosive scopophilia.

Just as the princess in 'The Magic Poker' cannot divest herself of golden pants, Dolly Tucker is tormented by her inability to stuff herself back into a tightfitting girdle. Like a turkey, she is basted with butter and poured into her skirt. Her host is titillated by her flabby features, just as his son is aroused by the babysitter's nubile flesh. But his closing remark to her is inscrutable: 'Your children are murdered, your husband gone, a corpse in the bathtub, and your house is wrecked' (193). 'Let's see what's on the late late movie,' she replies.

The bizarre conclusion mixes different ontological levels, and it is impossible to remove the diegetic filaments of the narrative from the texture of fantasy and fabulation. If there is a corpse in the tub, it may be that of Harry, the baby, or the sitter. But the chant is more reminiscent of a coy lady-bug ballad distorted by a drunken adult in a play of seduction mediated by television. If the chant articulates a 'real' set of events, then the ending of the story is undeniably grotesque. The celluloid world has so completely intruded in domestic life that it absorbs the story's diegetic narrative and privileges TV reflections over reality. Death and loss are backgrounded, the television image foregrounded. Learning of death of spouse or child, the drunken damsel takes refuge in the late show. When life becomes more violent than the television images that construct our experience, then our only escape may be unreal ontology of flickering lights and shadows. Corpses of TV are decidedly less threatening, and less ambivalent, than those bobbing in the bathtub.

Pynchon and Barth, Coover and Nabokov all give us different ways to interpret the modern world. But I would not like to suggest that every novelist writing in America today is intent on producing self-reflexive, experimental works of metafiction. For every avant-garde novelist in contemporary America, there are perhaps ten writers producing fiction that is in some way historical, realistic, and deftly representational. The 'humanist' tradition of moral fiction has continued to flourish alongside, and not necessarily in opposition to, the radical works I have discussed in this essay. After all James Joyce was concerned with forging the 'conscience' of the Irish race through novelistic portraits and parodies of his native Dublin. And the existential concern for a literature that will both please and instruct, for art that will offer signposts for making difficult moral choices among the ambiguities of modern life, continues to predominate in the majority of contemporary novels. We have only to consider the writings of Saul Bellow and Ralph Ellison, Alice Walker, Maxine Hong Kingston, Gail Godwin, and Toni Morrison.

I would like to propose, finally, that black and Third-World writers in America have a vested interest in offering us realistic, historical models of social and cultural possibility. By holding the mirror up to reality, they give us one good look at a culture that cries out for social change. (Perhaps ludic, zany, self-referential writing is an aesthetic indulgence of a decadent society.) It is wonderful fun to step through the looking-glass with Alice to delight in a world of fantasy and inversion. But ultimately, we must step back into the problematic world which we all inhabit and try to improve the social, cultural, and economic conditions that make *this* society less than perfect for millions of twentieth-century men and women.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Robert Alter, *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. x.
2. Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980), p. 1

3. Ibid., p. 6.
4. John Barth, *Lost in the Funhouse: Fiction for Print, Tape, Live Voice* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), p. 117.
5. Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: RKP, 1987), p. 45.
6. Quoted in Ibid., p. 75.
7. Nabokov, *Lectures on Literature*, ed. Fredson Bowers (London: Weidenfels & Nicolson, 1980), p. 290.
8. Alter, p. 187.
9. Ibid., p. 188.
10. Ibid., p. 189.
11. Nabokov, *Pale Fire* (1962; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 236.
12. Barth, p. 3.
13. Ibid., p. 5.
14. Ibid., p. 60.
15. Ibid., p. 81.
16. Ibid., p. 79.
17. McHale, p. 106.
18. Ibid., p. 120.
19. Ibid., p. 113.
20. Ibid., p. 114.
21. Ibid., p. 115.
22. Ibid., p. 116.
23. Ibid., p. 130.
24. Tony Tanner, *City of Words: American Fiction, 1950-1970* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 60.
25. Ibid., p. 76.
26. Robert Coover, *Pricksongs and Descants* (New York: Dutton, 1969), p. 20.
27. Ibid., p. 45.
28. Ibid., p. 33.
29. Ibid., p. 40.

Feminism and the Contemporary Hindi Novel

JAIDEV

This paper is divided into three parts. The first part seeks to problematize feminism in the context of our society. This part is especially concerned over the fact that although originally feminist literary theory emerged from the political activist project of feminism, today in the West it is turning more and more independent of that project. This is mainly due to the fact that feminism itself has not always proved invulnerable to the pressures of the system which has sought to co-opt it and thus reduce it to a mere trend. As such, one has to be wary both of this trendy, non-transgressive feminism and certain tendencies of feminist literary theory, if one wants to think purposefully of the woman's question in the Third World. This question is of paramount importance here too, but its contours and complexities are of a different order than in the West.[1] The second part of the paper focuses on the question as it appears in a few post-1960 Hindi novels. These represent a variety of impulses and approaches. *Rekha* and *Basanti* are woman-centered novels by men, but they are contrary in their ideological thrust. *Aapka Banti* is not basically a novel about woman, but it is sensitive in its depiction of the heroine's traps. *Pootonwali, Daar se Bichhudi* and *Mitro Marjani* are by women and raise the question without ever fetishizing or flaunting feminism. In contrast, the novels of Mridula Garg look trendy and derivative. Their feminism is as artificial and futile as their motivation. Garg's feminism is reflective of what I have called the culture of pastiche.[2] The third part is made up of some thoughts on framing courses on feminist fiction as well as teaching women's novels.

I

Problematizing Feminism and Feminist Literary Theory

> I am sick of being the victim
> of trends I reflect
> but don't even understand.[3]

The above lines, from a recent feminist play, are spoken by Kate, 'an affluenza-stricken American.' She finds her life extremely boring. The reason for this is that she has been reflecting trends which she does not understand at all. She comes to realize that instead of her using them, it is trends that have been using her. Her naïveté has been useful to the trend-setting, trend-selling, manipulative system which has 'the power to prevail.'[4] Any sophisticated system today operates not by direct and visible exploitation of people but by making them retain the illusion of freedom and free choice, by making them willingly give in to its imperatives, and by subtly ensuring that they do not see that they are its dupes and victims. Kate's anxiety is a first step towards recognising her position in the system whose trends hold her in thralldom.

A similar anxiety creeps into one's thoughts on feminism for the Third World. The anxiety is that instead of developing a genuine, need-based and legitimate feminism, we might simply be reflecting or buying a trendy feminism which is little different from many other multinational consumer products. Another source for this anxiety is that many of us assume that any novel by a woman must needs be a feminist text, and, conversely, that all novels by men must be untouchables in the feminist cause. This assumption is simplistic in the extreme, if only because so completely triumphant has been the masculine, patriarchal hegemony in our country that many women writers still consent to seeing the world exactly as men would see it, exactly as men would like women to see it, from a male point of view, that is. The resultant fictions prove to be no friends of women, for they only reinforce men's world, which is the more difficult to fight against because it has been created with the help of second-order, women collaborators. A very long history is behind this 'habit of the heart' but, I feel, in order at all to make our society become aware of the ways in which women subvert their own claims and interests, women's fiction has to get rid of this way of seeing and showing women. On the other hand, trendy feminism suffers from all those flaws which are characteristic of trends, trends as opposed to organically rooted, context-specific features. Trends, like ads-promoted fashions, thrust themselves upon our habits, but they do so by their dazzle, not their relevance. In a Third World country like ours, they prevail also because of their foreign origins.

Feminism is a global and revolutionary ideology and as such calls for a definite stance, a set of firm, exacting attitudes. The ideology is political because it addresses itself to that question of all questions, the question of power and its redistribution. It is revolutionary because it is against the status quo. Predictably enough, once it threatens to become something more than a laughing matter or gossip theme, it is viewed as a threat by forces that have stakes and interest in the status quo. These forces are not only sexist but include economic, political, religious, racist, neo-colonial and even multinational ones. Connexions stop nowhere, and a feminist should avoid being naive. There cannot be a significant gain for feminism without the entire system registering tremors and taking steps either to absorb the shock or else neutralize it. The system-preserving forces can be daring and ruthless in their attempts to curb such a disturbing tendency, but they can also be imaginative and innovative. They can manufacture imitation feminisms to counter the genuine one. They can also try to corrupt the latter from within. All is permissible.

Of the several strategies used by the capitalist system to contain or counter feminism, the two most important are: the strategy of trivializing and fetishizing feminism, and the strategy of making it too involved, jargon-ridden and abstractified. Under the first, feminism is reduced to a popular trend, a consumer item. The system appropriates feminism by initially allowing some unspectacular concessions and then by tailoring it so that it ceases to be a threat. This strategy can be called castration by canonization. Derrida's deconstruction has been more or less neutralized in this way in America, so that one may feel justified in enquiring of a deconstructionist if he is a simple deconstructionist or an American one, for the two are different species altogether. A more homely variation of this method is frequently seen on our television where many seemingly progressive women-centred programmes are carefully turned into an attack on feudalism, as if there were nothing wrong with the lot of woman under the industrial-capitalist system. One evil gets castigated for what it is, while the other becomes progress and development.

The second method bogs feminism under an avalanche of reflexive and self-begetting clichés and concepts, all introduced for a deflective purpose. The method has been long in use against Marxism in America. Many brilliant scholars are busy adding by thousands the basic terms and concepts one is supposed to master before trying to relate Marxism to society or political systems. Marxism thus becomes too specialized. The method is now being applied against feminism as well, if one goes by the number of new-fangled and curious notions, concepts and paradigms that have erupted. Feminist research is turning into an industry, and so micro and fine are its concerns that one is in danger of forgetting that feminism is praxis, that it is meant to address itself to real people and real problems. This micro-feminism may satisfy those who, as Kierkegaard noticed long ago, view theory not only as a substitute for living but also as a form of enhanced living. This fast-expanding feminism is part of what has been called the post-structuralist condition, and perhaps a few words on this condition are in order.

Feminist literary theory has begun to invade our consciousness in the wake of post-structuralism. The movement differs radically from the traditional approaches of literary criticism in that it does not emerge from, or even address itself to, existing literature. Post-structuralist literary theory usually evolves from semiotic logic. Literature as it exists does not have to prove the theory right. It is enough for a post-structuralist that literature can be written according to the theory. Such a premise seems depressing because it expects literature to learn from theory. In any case, several post-structuralists are feminists and naturally therefore they are engaged in creating a feminist aesthetic theory which, out of politeness, is supposed to illumine past texts but which actually will be fulfilled only in expressly-written texts for this theory. It is not at all clear though, how, for example, female time is different from male time. The former has been characterized as involved and fluctuating, while the latter is regarded as linear and forward-looking. This is polemical at best because a number of male writers, including Proust, Faulkner and Garcia Marquez, have followed 'female' time. The female sentence is similarly supposed to be tentative, open-ended, desiring continuity rather than snapping communication; and female reality is individual-oriented, not collective or societal.[5] This last concept has been shown to be at work in Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* which to most readers is the most collective and societal of all English novels of the 1960s, and which, according to its author, was intended 'to give the ideological "feel" of our mid century.'[6]

It is fortunate that the best Western feminist fiction has escaped the alienating polemic of notions like female syntax or female time. In this fiction, the vision, the style (which isn't merely a linguistic matter) and the feel are inescapably feminist—but none of these is reducible to clear conceptualization. Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*, Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*, and Toni Morrison's *Beloved* are all valuable feminist texts, concerned as they are with the question of power and the politics of gender. But none of them is a thesis novel; nor do they uphold as a matter of principle any of those quintessential features of feminism. This seems to me to be a happy state of affairs. For the day any theoretician is able to formulate precisely what is inalienably female about a sentence structure or a theme, we will begin to see men trying to appropriate it by clever imitations. The point is that it is possible for a misogynist to write a thoroughly anti-feminist text while still using each and every specific nuance of feminist literary theory. This mania for specifically feminine traits would not cause anxiety if it were merely a scholarly matter. Unfortunately, it can be mischievous by dissipating so much of 'feminist' energy over the sex of a sentence! The status-quoist forces naturally promote such an activity. The kind of biologism and sexual separatism implicit in such an activity also suits the interests of the status quo. Too much of microism and polarity (books for women, by women, about women?) is likely to be merely deflective, for the real aim of feminism is upstaged and considerable energy is spent in fighting against a particular syndrome of power instead of being concentrated on the power system.

Feminist literary theory under the aegis of poststructuralism may be well-intentioned but is susceptible to the pressures of the capitalist system which promotes fragmentation. The system can reduce, and has reduced, it to a mere commodity for consumption on a mass scale. In fact, this would not bother one much here except for one major reason: feminism commodified, tamed and fetishized serves as a trend for home consumption, but sooner or later it also becomes an export item, becomes part of cultural export, especially in countries where there exists a section of the population willing to cherish everything western, including western trivia. The market logic which brings Pepsi Cola cannot leave feminism alone but must ensure a flooding of our culture counters with feminism. And why not, when there are already keen collaborators (with their clear stakes in the status quo) as well as keen consumers? Culture sells here (and all culture is western), if not as culture per se, then as the free gift for promoting the sale of other, more important wares. Cultural pacts are a prelude to arms sale deeds, etc. Culture is business, just as lovely air-conditioned libraries and dirt-cheap text-books are part of a larger business deal. Kate in Wagner's play is naive, but whole nations can be naive as well. Without detracting from the value of the good work being done by several feminist groups in our country, I would like to suggest that given our bourgeois fondness for all western trends and fashions and also given the conversion of feminism into an international best-seller, we need to avoid becoming feminists just because it is in the in thing, because it promises trips abroad, avowedly to grasp the situation of woman in our rural areas!

So much of our urban bourgeois culture is the culture of pastiche, a bizarre combination of motifs and details picked without discrimination or understanding and stapled together to show off our foreign connexions. This culture is a mockery of culture and exults in exhibitionism and fetishes. It is ugly because it seldom connects with people, alienation being intrinsic to it. One is not impressed by someone who can spit out fifty lines of Kate Millett, Germaine Greer or Marilyn French, but who cannot understand the language of a village woman. Our universities are today so heavily alienated from the rhythms of our people, these are such bastardized and pastiche places, that one does not put too much faith in trendy campus progressivism or feminism. It is very necessary for us to have feminism but it should be authentic and rooted. One would not lament if our feminists are not too good at quoting western critics or weaving post-structuralist cobwebs. These do not matter. There is little mysterious about feminism and its ideological thrust. Also, one should not borrow or buy western details for the simple reason that these are context-bound. Pastiche in our country is becoming a prestige item, but we should learn to do without it. We should opt for the more demanding course, for that alone leads to liberation. Pastiche feminism, to improvise a dialogue from Wagner's play, can make Lib stand for libido, instead of liberation.

II

The Woman's Question and Some Contemporary Hindi Novels

There is a whole tradition of novels about women by men, and if this is not without merit of its own, it is surely because there is a good deal of commonality of concerns between men and women. Woman's sexual identity is crucial to be sure, but it exists alongside her identity as a social, economic and familial being. Empathy, sharp observation and understanding of her contexts are strengths for any novelist. So much so that Prem Chand's *Godan*, for example, appears flawed not along the sexual lines but along the made-up ones. The book succeeds extremely well with the rural characters, both male and female, but is weak when it comes to the characters in the city. In the absence of the above-mentioned strengths, no amount of conceptual neatness helps. I wish to open this discussion with two contrastive studies of women by men: *Rekha* by Bhagwati Charan Verma and *Basanti* by Bhishm Sahni.

Rekha fails as a character because she is an extended exercise in reductive formulation. She is predictable through and through, and each of her Madame Bovary acts seems aimed either at pleasing an audience which is supposed to derive from fiction some voyeuristic pleasure or else to demonstrate how infallible one's own thesis about incompatible sexual relations is. She does not look alive or plausible, but then neither do any of her male lovers or relations. One can have no quarrel with the novel's message: an idealistic but physically foolish marriage is a sad, degrading thing; but the message remains trite even though nearly three hundred pages are spent on 'realizing' it.

The novel is plotted along a conceptual self-other polarity, so that man is seen as the other of woman, his 'presences' as her 'absences' and vice versa. Rekha is physical-narcissistic while her intellectual husband is devoid of vitality. Her odyssey includes a set of lovers whom she variously uses and is used by—in the hopeless hope of satisfying her sexual urges. The result is a chain of unedifying frustrations. It is true that in the beginning she is shown to be intellectually sharp; it is also true that her husband is not without passion. But these extra-aspects are not introduced to make the characters complex. They are mere extra touches on a design which is too theoretical-conceptual. Given the design, the heroine neither learns anything from the past nor grows up in any significant way. Her socio-moral contexts are relatively absent, and this absence is mainly due to the flaw in her conception: she is visualized as part of an intellectually worked-out equation, not as a real being. Partial truths are wildly generalized as absolute truths but they look factitious: 'I know, Gyan [Rekha's confidante], that I am heading towards disaster. That's what you want to say, don't you? But tell me which person in the world is not heading towards disaster? Once we are born, we start nearing towards death! Then why should we bother? Why can't we forget disaster and death? Why can't we close our eyes to these and then live as freely as we can—as long as we can? A suffocating solitude is equal to hundreds of deaths, Gyan! I cannot live in suffocation!'[7] Such universalizings co-exist with much self-pity and self-rationalization in the heroine, and the author does nothing to qualify them through irony; instead, he allows these unchecked to generate pity for her: 'She was feeling that in this world she was absolutely lonely. And all those who were around her were narrow and self-enclosed, were sunk in their own selfishness. No one had any sympathy or sensitivity—everywhere people were selfish and egotistic.'[8] This is almost a more sympathetic comment on *Madame Bovary* patched on Rekha by her author. She blames people and society but it is difficult to see why, unless one were to believe that she is a fine creative person much too good for the world around her. *Rekha* illustrates well the limits of authorial empathy for his female heroine. He cannot relate her to her narcissism; nor can he relate her to her social and familial contexts. The result is that she appears to be merely an attractive fantasy moving from one set of male arms to another. A feminist is hardly likely to be grateful for a novel like *Rekha*.

By contrast, Sahni's Basanti is an intensely realized character because she is not at all a formula. She is understood as a sexual being but also as a class product, a cultural being, a psychological person. When it is stated by the author that she cannot plan her tomorrow, one understands it because the statement is part of an overall, well-substantiated thematic one.

> She was never able to see far ahead of her, and even when she tried to visualize the future, she could not see anything. For people like her, no single day is linked with the next; each day is an entity by itself. She could not connect her today with her tomorrow. If today happened to bring her work, then it was a working day. If tomorrow should not bring her any work, then that would be that. A day gets linked with its successor only

> when one is able to have work as the stabilizing feature in one's life. Where any day, any moment one can lose one's job, one's man can run away, or one's home and locality can be reduced to a rubble, there how can one plan one's days, months or years? Any day should pass the way it must; one could not be bothered about tomorrow.[9]

Each day for Basanti is potentially capable of being a crisis. She has no love of crises; nor does she have any access to existentialism or its favoured contingencies. Yet she emerges as an authentic being in her own right. One may call her existential, but the basic point about her is that she *is*, is absolutely uncontaminated by any theoretic-conceptual frames. To the extent that both men and women exist in a common but larger socio-economic context, their similarities deserve to be depicted. One point in *Basanti* is that Basanti's only confidante, a middle-class woman, Shyama by name, uses her for her own superior, egotistic needs. Because of a superstitious fear, Shyama dares not offend Basanti, but still she is totally rooted in her own class and classy tastes. To Shyama, Basanti's tragedy is a peripheral matter; what gratifies her is that her knowledgeable 'forecasts' about Basanti have come true. Hadn't she told Basanti that she should not trust her married lover? 'Shyama Bibi always talks as if she has secured victory over Basanti. She won't be sad to know that Deenu [the lover] has again deserted me. Rather, she will be happy to note that her prophecy has come true.'[10]Shyama is a bit of a caricature, but even so, she looks real in her narrow philistinism, her fear of disaster, her 'safe' compassion, and her self-righteousness. And if Basanti, at the end, appears to be quite a heroine, valuable as a mirror to woman's desperation but also her innate resilience, this is because Sahni does not create her as a part of some equation, but rather as a throbbing, living character amidst a solid, multi-factorial context. In its own way, *Basanti* is as feminist as any feminist text can be. Together with empathy and observation, a mature realism and a valid social stance are values in a novel about woman, irrespective of the sex of the author.

The above remarks on *Rekha* and *Basanti* are only incidentally comparative. They are actually intended to highlight the danger of compartmentalizing men and women as if they were isolable and exhibited only differences. There is always this temptation of neatly isolating characters along the sexual poles for the purpose of building up a dramatic clash, but these poles are themselves more artificial than real, besides constituting only a partial truth about either sex. The resultant sexual separatism, I fear, does more harm than good to the cause of women. Whether it promotes militancy in women or deification of woman by man, it tends to ignore all those common realities that impinge on them both. Considering that often mutual admiration can be based on mutual misunderstanding and also considering that much of the edification of woman goes side by side with her victimisation, feminism ought to distinguish between ways of seeing woman. The self-other polarity is something it should be wary of, even when it idolizes woman.

The tendency to idolize or mythify woman diminishes the achievement that Shivani's *Pootonwali* otherwise is: an extremely poignant exposure of Parvati, the mother of five sons who all desert her in a most ungrateful way. Parvati is an eternal victim, almost the Victim with a capital V. With no physical charm, no ability or even desire to assert herself, and indeed little of a self about her, this silent but also silenced victim is negated even by her husband whom she has given five sons. A decade passes before he speaks a (naturally derogatory) sentence to her! It is during a bout of illness that the husband recognizes how much he has been taking her for granted all the while. He mends his perception, mends his responses to her, and even begins to adore her. Now, she is a marvel to him, for she has borne all anguish without a word of complaint: 'It was incredible that though he hadn't uttered a single word to her all these years, this amazing woman had never poured out a drop from her cup of anguish!'[11] He redeems himself as much as is still possible, which isn't much really, for Parvati is heading towards death. However, she dies contented, for she has been able to retrieve her husband. Apparently, her life has been a success. Without causing any inconvenience to her husband, she decorates herself as a bride and then quietly departs from the world. Ironically, it is because of having five sons to her credit that she is given a saintly status by the community. It is all very moving, but her canonization as well as her tragedy follows a powerful stereotype whose reality is not in question, but whose implications are problematic. Shivani's compassionate realism is her strength, as is also her very subtle irony. These ensure that both her male and female characters look real enough. She is also extremely aware of the pressures wielded on our traditional familial structures by materialism, modern education, westernization and urbanisation. She also knows how much psychological violence has been implicit even in those traditional structures. It is, however, doubtful that Parvati can be a model for Indian woman any longer. It is not clear why Shivani had to narrate the story largely from the husband's point of view. Of course, the narrative point of view does not stop the story from being a protest against the victimisation of Parvati. But the absence of what Parvati feels results in two things: one, it sentimentalises her, and two, it leaves one wondering if Parvati ever dreams of protesting against the injustice. One of course is not saying that such women are mere inventions in the context of India. Only that erasing all signs of resentment cannot be the best thing for women's cause, even though such an erasing is performed for deifying her. One still prefers an authentic story like *Poontonwali* to her rather melodramatic ones about more aggressive women like 'Badla' or 'Likhun?' but the problematic of woman as angel deserves to be considered carefully.

Less sentimental in its treatment of woman is Krishna Sobti's *Dar Se Bichhudi*. Its heroine, Pasho, too is a born victim, being the daughter of one who married unconventionally and in a family and community hostile to her own. Pasho is beautiful and is persecuted and censured a lot by her relations who see in her every act a desire to repeat her mother. She flees into the haveli of her mother, just in time because the next morning she is going to be sold in a fair. Her escape threatens to generate violence between the two communities, and therefore again she is secretly sent away and married off to a trader who is old but still cares for her. Once she has successfully cleared the test by giving birth to a male baby, she becomes the lady of the house. However, her husband dies, and her travails begin. She is reduced to a commodity transferable for money, violable without scruple, a creature fit only for cages and traps and of course for sexual pleasure.

There is tremendous empathy and compassion Sobty brings towards Pasho. Sobti is aware of feminism and its issues, but she has no wish to fetishize them. She also avoids sentimentalisation and in this she is so very superior to, say, Amrita Pritam. An extremely powerful novelist whose narrational pace, precise tone, economy and gutsy dialogue would be a matter of envy to any novelist, she roots her characters in firm historical and social contexts, so that whatever their feelings for these contexts, the characters themselves are like plants nourished as well as defaced by their roots. *Daar Se Bichhudi* is a picaresque novel of sorts, and wherever Pasho finds herself, she looks convincing because at every stage she is enclosed by history and community. Family pride, fear of scandal, greed, callousness, the male image of man as a warrior and of woman as a thing, the hegemony of patriarchy,[12] and the desperate battles of the Sikhs against the British—all these and more are unfolded alongside Pasho's degrading journeys. The difference between a self-effacing victim like Parvati and a helpless victim like Pasho is that the latter cannot revolt against the injustices, but she would like to. Nor is Pasho a person without a self of her own. Pasho is situated in the nineteenth century, but from there she is able to make the reader see both the change in woman's situation and the change in her objective circumstances over time.

The same kind of realism is visible in *Mitro Marjani* where the sexually-unfulfilled heroine begins in arrogance over her ravishing beauty but eventually, in a grand climax, learns that even her quick spell over a number of men is no answer to her identity needs. She has no great illusions about the joint family at her inlaws; she has no great commitment to notions of fidelity and honour, either. However, the promiscuity which she has inherited from her mother without shame she gives up even as her mother has arranged an orgiastic night for her. She suddenly sees how dried up the mother feels after her youth has gone. So Mitro gives up the fantastic opportunity and goes back to the less-than-a-stud of her husband. For the desire to exploit her sexual charms might yield her some satisfaction, but it only means an acceptance of being a sex object. Her story is more contemporary and it is noteworthy that her rejection of her desire to ravish others—her desire to charm—would qualify her as a very self-aware feminist. Similarly, Mitro refuses to edify mere promiscuity as liberating, although she is liberated in not being coerced by the patriarchal norms of family honour and sexual fidelity. Most significantly, Mitro arrives at these feminist truths not through any western course, but by seeking to preserve her self amidst a wholly repressive milieu. It might appear to some 'male' readers that Mitro makes a very difficult wife, but then it is good to realize that it is not easy to be a woman like her, either. She is a rebel, but she is willing to learn; above all, she is not a rebel for the sake of being one. No sooner does she realize that her own mother is using her than she shoves her aside: 'With a deep hissing throatful of sound, the mother advanced towards Mitro. First she was scared, but then with effort she steadied herself and shrieked in anger and pain: "You, disciple of Siddha Bhairon, now you are planning to fry me and my husband like the fish in your barren pan? This won't happen, I am telling you!" And then she jumped past her like an arrow and locked herself in the room where Sardari Lal [her husband] lay sleeping.'[13]

The same level of maturity and seriousness is there in Mannu Bhandari's classic *Aapka Banti*. For its chief concern, it has the predicament of a young kid whose parents have separated, but side by side the novel also brings out the predicament of the young mother who must repress her own emotional and physical needs in order to fulfil her obligations as mother. The book passes no judgements, for basically it is concerned with a situation in which no one is to blame, in which each is a victim, in which even two victims' interests clash so that any satisfaction to the self must generate guilt towards the other. The novel also carefully avoids sentimentality even though everything in the book touches enough sentiments in the reader. Above all, it avoids idealizing its characters. For all his mute, inexplicable misery, Banti himself is demanding and can be hurting. The mother, too, has participated in the politics of the family, has used Banti as a card against the husband, and even now is subconsciously holding on to him as a means of retaliation: 'Very gently she lowered him down on the bed—as if the child were a most precious, priceless object. And then a very curious feeling flashed across her heart—Banti is not just her son, he is also an instrument of torture in her hands; she can torture Ajay with him, she will.'[14] The marriage was a battle, and a child born in it had to be treated like a weapon by the parents. Banti's sufferings are the inevitable outcome of the split family. A split family can produce a split, neurotic child only—this much is clearly dramatised in the novel. But beyond this, the book also brings tremendous compassion to the lonely mother who cannot escape guilt just as she cannot escape censure from others.

Aapka Banti is thus a novel of victims. Primarily a novel about the child, its stance is nevertheless feminist in the best sense of the term. It accepts the sad fact that a marriage gone wrong is bad for its product, but then it also makes it clear that even if there were no separation of the parents, the child would have been damaged no less. More sober still is its acceptance of the fact that the failure of a marriage does not necessarily mean that either one or both of the partners have been guilty. One thing the novel is not doing, I think, is inviting the reader to judge them. In fact, in their own ways, both Shakun and Ajay are decent people and love their child; the novel does not see incompatibility as flaw. This is not to say that the novel acquits them of responsibility for Banti's tragedy; but still it withholds moral judgement. In addition to that, the novel shows Shakun learning both through suffering and through the good intervention of her new husband that she should neither torture herself too much nor, of course, seek to use Banti for her own ego needs. Finally, the novel's resolution, sad as it is, is realistic enough to break the stepmother myth on the one hand and, on the other, to appreciate Shakun's reluctant concession to the pleasure principle in her life. An extremely complex and sensitive novel, *Aapka Banti* simplifies nothing, appreciates the point of view of the old *phoophi* when she presents the traditional stereotypes about the stepmother or about the sanctity of marriage, captures the violence within Banti as well as his torments, realistically admits that even an independent woman requires a man for support, and at the same time upholds the right of a woman to dignity and happiness. To live life is often to have to choose the second-best, and this second-best is usually little better than the worst, but still it is better to face up to the truth of one's situation. Shakun does face up to it.

Finally, a novelist who is conscious of feminism and Women's Lib in a way none of the others are. Mridula Garg may well be about the only female novelist in Hindi who is so concerned to seek a close kinship with feminists in the West. There is little Indian about her novels which, even though claiming to be (dare I say?) the Gitas of liberation and transcendence, are all exercises in narcissistic fantasy. She has no use for realism or social conscience, and though it is true that she dabbles a lot in politics, economics, history, and metaphysics, her amateurism breeds only trivial gestures. Fantasy, no doubt, can be an appropriate subversive mode, often useful for feminism, but in Garg fantasy is confined to highlighting the beauty and desirability of heroines who look like the author's own projections. Fantasy here, in other words, has no reference to reality outside, and as such looks only self-indulgence. One thing that is common in her three novels *Uske Hisse ki Dhoop* (1976), *Chittkobra* (1979) and *Main aur Main* (1984), the three forming a trilogy of sorts, is their heroines' life-style: they all are supposed to be writers, they all need men both for sex and for creativity, they all spend their daytime either dreaming of or enacting superlative sex which is of course outside marriage and in expensive hotels; the (fortunately always) deserted roads are used for lesser acts. In *Chittkobra* and *Main aur Main*, the artist-heroines are also mothers, but the children are virtually dematerialized. The husbands are rather indifferent to what the wives do and do not prize fidelity in them, although they themselves are averse to adultery. The suggestion actually is that what work is to the husbands, romance is to the wives. Boredom is the greatest sin, and without adultery what else can arise except boredom? Of course, to be fair to Garg and her favoured heroines, adultery partakes of transcendence, something absolutely inconceivable in the wretched thing called marriage. In any case, the husbands are valuable as the providers; formally they are needed because the tales deal with adultery. Otherwise, they are part of the crowd, are social beings or *bheed*, in contrast to whom the heroines emerge as *Insaans*, as individuated, God-made beings. The texts are situated in a near-total social vacuum in that relations do not seem to exist; neighbourhood is taboo; and the limited middle-class ethos is hinted at and denounced. Many kinds of issues get mentioned, including literary ones such as the superiority of Dostoevsky over Kafka and Camus (some insinuation this!),[15] the writer as an outcast,[16] life and/as theatre,[17] and several kunstlerroman issues.

Mridula Garg's fiction is instructive for the negative lesson it holds for the woman's question in India. It seems to have this desire to make the most of her being a woman—which is not a bad idea, except for the fact that this leads her to match the male authors of a low mould in an act of self-assertion, in an act of 'manly' defiance without direction. Her gifts are for titillating sensational-ism, not literary, in spite of her name-droppings of Kafka and Dostoevsky, and these gifts are sought to be made superior and feminist by wrapping them with two extra layers, one of pastiche, the other of satirical vignettes, these being examples of indiscriminate and self-righteous bashing. Pastiche is at the source of *Chittkobra*, for example. Some of the central fantasies here are derived from *The Rape of the Lock* (the oddity of a Scottish actor-photographer-priest-humanist-lover uses a pair of scissors at the hair of the heroine who sees the act as the rape of her long-nurtured Indianness—and is rather pleased), from Philip Roth's *The Breast* in which the novelist-hero suffers from the psychosomatic delusion that his whole body has become a female breast (in Garg, the heroine imagines how wonderful it would be if she could become a giant breast for the convenience of her husband—though it is not realized by the author that Roth and his novelist-hero have misogynist tendencies), from Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (the heroine wishes to turn into a huge insect like Gregor Samsa; she wishes so in order to escape cooking for her relations on a Sunday—they have contradictory tastes), and from *Love Story* which is the model for its dialogues as well as its sentimental celebration of love. The novel is also spiced with explicit sex scenes (Liberation as Libido), Mother Teresa, Gandhi plus Christ plus Marx which trio is presented as a *roopa* of Parvati (some feminism this!), and a recurrent polarity of marriage vs. love, of the individual vs. the *bhee* , of the God-made individual vs. society-made *bheed*, of body vs. heart. So rigorous are these polarities that when the heroine indulges her social conscience, both she and her conscience appear to be cruel jokes—for neither Bangla Desh victims nor the Indian poor have done anything to deserve a patron who thanks God for an illness in her family because it can be used as a pretext for not having to go to Bangla Desh and who writes unmeaning satires on the lot of the poor in India.

Garg's feminism is trendy because it has no roots, not even in the West (she thinks Christ was born in Europe![18] and the heroine's European lover is hardly a character, what with his being a priest who declares that the seventh commandment does not apply to him and who wants people to scoff at God so that the latter would be compelled to come down and with his worship of the heroine as his God the Father). One wonders if this liberation can have any value for anyone. This kind of feminism can be only a liability for the woman's cause in the Third World. Firm realism, an intelligent socio-political stance and overall seriousness are essential for any worthwhile feminist fiction, even though it can always accommodate subversive fantasy or innovations.

III

It would not be surprising at all if the novel in other Indian languages also exhibits similar syndromes. The effort behind the above exercise has not been to evaluate novels purely as works of literature; rather, it has been to see how responsible and responsive these are to the woman's question in India. As far as I know, the situation is similar in, say, the Indian novel in English. Rushdie is quite reductive of women in his novels; so is R.K. Narayan. One is surprised to note that novels by women can be equally against the cause of women. For example, Sahgal's *A Day in Shadow* is centred around a middle-class, educated woman. The novel has two men, both reductive and vulgar, who talk and reflect on politics, and two others who more convincingly represent the rising trading and industrialist class. The book is in English and is extremely conscious of its possible market in the West, and therefore goes out of its way to denounce Marxism, Russia and the left, as if these were plagues. This paranoiac-opportunistic aspect apart, the novel is a bad feminist book because it depicts woman as victim but recommends that she stay dependent for all practical purposes on man. It is shocking how it accepts polarization as the eternal law. A woman won't talk politics, won't know where she is signing, won't object when her lover (who has been asking her to be independent and assertive) announces before another person that he is going to marry her without first consulting her, won't question the mystifying nonsense of her lover about Hinduism and Christianity when her own predicament is clearly economic, not religious. She accepts so very abjectly the definitions of woman which men have worked out, and indeed she does not mind when her lover calls her daughters 'the litter'. She would still be acceptable as a realistic portrait of a trapped, exploited woman who has not even begun to see that she is a victim. But how do we rationalize the author's naïveté in letting the male lover get away with his all-too-manly handling of the heroine whom he loves but also patronises a little too much? How do we rationalize Sahgal's own refusal to tell the reader how many daughters the litter is supposed to comprise or what their names are? Sahgal diminishes her women about as much as men diminish them. This anomaly is instructive: it is part and parcel of the way women are exploited by men that they, the victims, speak the language of men, indoctrinated as they are. And they speak and think like men want them to, even when they are independent. This shows how difficult a task feminism has in this country, but it also shows that many novels written by women in this country are anti-feminist, pro-male. So a university course on Indian women novelists, while it may appear to deal with 'a literature of their own', is not necessarily a feminist course!

A feminist novel for India is not a novel which a woman will write just because she is a woman and knows how to write. It will be written by one who has understood a woman both as a woman and as a person pressurized by all kinds of visible and invisible contexts, by one who is not carried away by fetishes but is mature enough to see that it does not do to make such irresponsible and meaningless statements as this one about Hinduism and Christianity: These 'had to be joined—united in an ocean of strength if [India] was to combat the genius of Marx.'[19] If Jane Austen, George Eliot or Emily Bronte were not feminists, then the task of a feminist today is going to be more difficult than theirs—this task includes their task plus something more. For us here, in India, it is tempting to say, well, these are our feminist writers, as if making do is all that matters. No, we should insist on a true feminist novel for India, encouraging our young (and not so young) writers to prepare for this, hope for one, but we should not issue false certificates. It is a lesser disgrace to admit that so far we do not have a *Middlemarch* or a *Surfacing* or a *Golden*

Notebook than to be found inventing ideological similarities between Atwood and Mridula Garg.

Naïveté and sentimentalisation are to be opposed if our fiction has to contribute to the cause of feminism. This fiction has also to reject that market logic which promotes pastiche, trendy feminism and deflective micro-specialization. I have nothing against a course on women novelists; this is only necessary. But we should not fetishize women novelists. Men are bad enough, but God knows women can be naive or misguided, too. This is, I think, where the teacher has to bring a certain amount of understanding of politics, history, culture and socio-economic systems. In addition, this 'feminist' teacher has to know how to resist the text and to read what the text may be conveying subliminally. In other words, the teacher in the Third World has to be political. This approach would pay dividends even in reading or teaching a writer like Jonathan Swift. Perhaps it is more important to read books feministically, i.e. politically than to read women's novels. In fact, it is necessary to read politically both men's and women's novels. And of course reading novels is just one task; another is reading politically thousands of messages which flit across our consciousness day in, day out in our social existence.

Finally, what do we as teachers of literature do in our contribution to feminism? We might be seeing as buds people who are going to flower into writers. We are perhaps good critics, and we can therefore explain to them how a feminist novel should be written, although we haven't written it ourselves. We might also explain that too many of our fairy tales, folk tales and myths are anti-feminist, and that they are anti-feminist even when they worship women as deities, and these need to be reinterpreted not just feministically but humanistically. There are absences, erasures and gaps in our epics and these can be filled in by feminist writers. As students and critics, we need to read feministically not just women's texts but men's as well. Finally, there is need to revise the list of canonized texts, because canonization involves power-factors. Young students especially should be encouraged to know more of the unromantic, marginalized but true India and learn not to bring any sentimental or naïve expectations to bear on it. It is only here that feminism can have any possible significance for us. The difficulty of acting here is genuine, but action here is surely more valid than any of those imitative, pastiche gestures like smoking or drinking which one does not even enjoy but reflects and enacts just because they are considered trendy.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. For a discussion of the differences between women's situation in the East and the West, see Mathreyi Krishna Raj, 'Women and Cultural Change,' in S. Karuna Mary Braganza and Saleem Peeradina, eds., *Cultural Forces Shaping India* (New Delhi: Macmillan, 1989), p. 187.
2. See my 'How Did we get Bad?: Lessons of *Surfacing*' in Om P. Juneja and Chandra Mohan, eds., *Ambivalence* (New Delhi: Allied, 1990), pp. 276-83.

3. Jane Wagner, *The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), p. 53.
4. The phrase is Eric Clark's who uses it to characterize the capitalist advertising industry in *The Want Makers* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988), p. 18.
5. Suzanne Hall, 'Feminist Writing: Some Twentieth Century British Women Writers: Hopes and Achievements,' *Literature Alive*, 1 (Sept. 1987), 1-14.
6. Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* (1962; rpt. Frogmore: Panther, 1973), p. 11.
7. Bhagwati Charan Verma, *Rekha* (1964; rpt. New Delhi: Rajkamal Paperbacks, 1986), p. 255.
8. Ibid., p. 173.
9. Bhishm Sahni, *Basanti* (1980; rpt. New Delhi: Rajkamal paperbacks, 1983), p. 138.
10. Ibid., p. 162.
11. Shivani, *Pootonwali* (Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1986), p. 14.
12. Cf. the self-abasing Mausi: 'Stop bothering about me, a thin worn-out thing! I shall be your mortal enemy if you would give birth to a daughter. I shall throw you and the female baby in the stable. Do you understand?' *Daar Se Bichhudi* (1958; rpt. New Delhi: Rajkamal Paperbacks, 1984), p. 39.
13. Krishna Sobti, *Mitro Marjani* (1967; rpt. New Delhi: Rajkamal Paperbacks, 1987), p. 100.
14. Mannu Bhandari, *Aapka Banti*, student edition (New Delhi: Radhakrishan Paperbacks, 1986), p. 44.
15. Mridula Garg, *Main aur Main* (New Delhi: National, 1984), p.6.
16. Mridula Garg, *Uske Hisse ki Dhoop* (1976; rpt. New Delhi: Rajkamal Paperbacks, 1987), p. 141.
17. Ibid., p. 64.
18. Mridula Garg, *Chittkobra*, 3rd ed. (New Delhi: National, 1981), p. 82.
19. Nayantara Sahgal, *The Day in Shadow* (1971; rpt. Delhi: Vikas, Bell Books, 1973), p. 201.

Some Trends in American Feminist Criticism

MALASHRI LAL

Towards the end of *The Scarlet Letter,* Hawthorne attributed a vision of the future to Hester Prynne: 'When the world should have grown ripe for it, in Heaven's own time, a new truth would be revealed in order to establish the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness.'[1] In Hawthorne's own time, the mid-nineteenth century, a greater freedom for women was already emerging as a new truth but in the world of literary studies women remained somewhat neglected in a male-centred view of what constitutes literary merit. Hawthorne himself spoke angrily of the popular women writers as 'a damned mob of scribbling women' and decried the public taste for sensational sentimental fiction. After Hawthorne, another century was to go by before women writers could hope for a new truth to emerge about their parity with men writers. And it is only in our time, the 1970's and 80's, that one sees a possible re-arrangement of literary history. Feminists are asking for fresh thinking about literary merit and the aesthetics of writing, they are emphasising the politics and sociology of the novel, they are demanding a rightful place for the 'woman's perspective' on life and literature. Consequently, an energetic ideological-critical debate forms the backdrop to all readings of literature today. The terms of reference are numerous and sometimes confusing, but we are getting familiar with the catchwords such as 'opening up the canon,' patriarchy, binary opposition, gynocritics, sexual-textual politics, 'womanism.'[2] While all these terms have a useful place in feminist criticism, let me focus on only three which have particular relevance to American literature. (1) I will begin by discussing problems of the literary canon, and (2) link it up with the theory of gynocritics, or looking at woman as the producer of meaning, and (3) end with a short statement on black feminism, or as it is preferably called, 'womanism.' On each of these three issues, I will try to indicate literary examples which authenticate the feminist argument and which may encourage us to think independently upon the present critical debates.

Let me turn first to matters relating to the canon—a word deliberately borrowed from theology to accentuate the declared sanctity of a few great books. Questions are being raised about the fixity of a list that traditional literary history has brought to students of American writing—books which are said to be models of aesthetic excellence and those which are representative of the culture. As all Americanists will recall, F.O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance*, published in 1941, brought into synthesis the ideas of New Criticism and Parrington's notion of the 'main currents' of literature. Matthiessen announced that the period 1850–1855 was crucial to American writing for in this time five great authors wrote great books which were brilliant representations of the American ideal of democracy. These writers were Emerson, Whitman, Hawthorne, Thoreau and Melville, and they celebrated the American themes of self-reliance, initiative, individualism, and the freedom of man in the open air. Matthiessen subtitled the book 'Art & Expression in the age of Emerson and Whitman'—'art' meaning a small group of aesthetic masterpieces and 'expression' meaning ideas illuminating the culture at large.[3] Matthiessen's brilliant synthesis and influential opinion held sway over American academia for almost forty years. The formulations were neat, the chosen texts were convenient models by which all other American writing could be judged; moreover, the writings contained flattering tributes to the cherished ideals of democracy. Matthiessen established the consensus and it gathered force as later historians and critics refined several aspects of his argument. The direct impact of Matthiessen is visible in the compendium called *The Literary History of the United States* (1948) edited by Robert Spiller, et al. Though a larger number of writers are seen to compose the literary history, the definition of greatness is unchanged. Spiller's 'Address to the Reader' reminds us of the power and vitality of the nation, nature altered by the efforts of man, robust literature, virile criticism.[4] The consensus continues in the writings of Richard Chase, Charles Fiedelson and R.W.B. Lewis, a consensus which gives prominence to five writers—all men, white, and protestant.[5] Representative American experience is described as manly endeavour and achievement—home-leaving such as Ahab's and Ishmael's, adventurism such as Thoreau's, tramp-like mobility such as Whitman's, self-reliance such as advocated by Emerson. Hawthorne remains something of an exception, for he alone of the famous five was blessed with an androgynous mind.

This notion of a male-dominated American Renaissance has come in for severe attack by the feminists, and for good reasons. It may be pointed out that the great American books are hardly representative of *common* human experience. Most of us live, whether we like it or not, in the relatedness of family and society—as fathers, mothers, sons and daughters, husbands and wives, citizens of a country, consumers of material goods, wage-earners in an economy. Most of us are not actually free like Ishmael to take off on a ship when the 'damp, drizzly November' enters the soul, or like Whitman to lean on the wicket gate and invite the soul to loaf on the grass. While we partake of the metaphysics of the great books that probe the power of blackness, and while we dwell imaginatively upon the implications of Ahab's quest and Thoreau's log cabin, we must see these as *incomplete* representations of human experience. The uncelebrated 'other' part of human existence is taken up with the ordinary, the habitual, much of which usually falls within the realm of the *female* experience of home-making and societal responsibilities. Woman, as the repository of domestic ethics, was (and is) expected to maintain order, morality, discipline in her own life and in her environment. As a result of this role, women as writers necessarily drew upon their own segment of human experience and composed literary themes significantly different from those attempted by men. Women wrote of home-making, not home-leaving, they wrote of self-sacrifice instead of individualism, community-coherence instead of self-reliance, passivity instead of action, silence instead of verbalising, resignation or compromise instead of assertiveness. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance* allows no room for such categories of female experience. Other historians have done worse by placing women's writing in a condemned category called the domestic, sentimental novel.

The current negotiations about the literary canon move along these lines of reconsidering the categories of excellence, and validating the women's experience of America. Pivotal to the discussion is Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), a novel composed of the popular elements of melodrama, humour, pathos, sentimentality, a novel published during the period of the *American Renaissance* but ignored by Matthiessen though it had far more spectacular market sales than any of the 'great books.' Feminists wonder about the neglect of this text. Was it because the author was a woman? Because the book showed up the falsity of the American democratic ideal which preached equality for white men and slavery for the black? Because the climactic episodes were moments of feminine drama rather than male heroics? Because the subversive politics of the novel shows a disturbing similarity between the subjugated white women and the enslaved black race? These questions point to the complex nuances of the story and belie the traditional assumption about the simple, episodic nature of Stowe's book. Essentially, feminists are calling for a review of the condemned category of nineteenth-century women's novel. Jane Tompkins in her recent book *Sensational Designs* believes that sentimental novels can be read as 'a political enterprise, halfway between sermon and social theory,' and sees in them a critique of American society 'far more devastating' than any delivered by better known writers such as Hawthorne and Melville.[6] Jane Tompkins calls the sentimental novel 'the other American Renaissance' alluding to the spheres of experience that Matthiessen chose to eliminate from the canon. Though Tompkins sometimes overstates the point, she makes a valuable contribution to feminist thinking by alerting us to the fact that women writers use their own strategies for making social and political comment. Stowe has a different *kind* of intellectual complexity, ambition and resourcefulness than, say, Melville.

As a direct example of this line of criticism, I could look briefly at the most sentimental moment in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the death of Eva. The one scene of the angelic little girl praying for the delivery of the slaves at the time of her own affliction from tuberculosis stays vividly in the mind of every reader.[7] Eva turns her attention to the black orphan child Topsy who keeps saying, 'I am a nigger. Nobody love niggers, and niggers can't do nothing.' Eva reaches out to her 'like a bright angel stooping to reclaim a sinner' and says, 'O Topsy poor child I love you... I love you, because you, because you haven't had any father, or mother, or friends, because you've been a poor abused child.' Thereafter

Eva dies. Her declared love for Topsy brings a gender connection which breaks through the barriers of race and class. Eva's death initiates a process of change. Topsy is adopted by a white New England lady, brought into the fold of society and later sent to Africa as a missionary to carry forward the message of love that had saved her. Eva's dying words, 'O love,—joy,—peace,' codify Stowe's humanitarian concern even as the novel explores how much of this concern can be realised in action. Despite the methods of sentimentality, Stowe keeps a firm hold on social realism. Eva's death saves *one* black child, it does not bring about a larger manumission of plantation slaves. History was to do that. Meanwhile Stowe's claims are modest. In a letter she mentions that as a woman and a mother, she understood the sufferings of the 'oppressed' race and wished to speak for 'those who cannot speak for themselves.' In the novel Stowe suggested reform within the domestic sphere. The white masters would not give up the economic advantages of slave labour; it was for the white mistresses to create an atmosphere of sympathetic influence. As Stowe says, 'there is one thing that every individual can do—they can see to it that *they feel right*.' [8] The novel's sentimental power rests upon the traditional strength of Christian charity and domestic coherence, and it gives a call to women as possible agents of change. In her own time Harriet Beecher Stowe was greeted by President Abraham Lincoln as 'the little woman who made the great war.' Feminists today believe that a novel so strongly representative of the woman's sympathetic view of slavery deserves a place in the literary history of the American people.[9]

Once the canon is opened up, the danger of course is that texts will be smuggled in just because they are written by women. If valuation is denied, if artistic merit is less important than political statement, if the line between popularity and exclusiveness is blurred beyond recognition, how can we decide what to read? Though feminists do not offer an answer, they offer a methodology—and this brings me to the second important happening in American feminism. Elaine Showalter calls it 'gynocritics,' a special strategy for reading based upon 'what women have felt and experienced.'[10] Gynocritics sees female experience as essentially different from male, and women's writing having its own history, themes, genres and structures. According to Showalter, texts will yield special meaning if interpreted through female perceptions. These perceptions are not however, biologically determined, but they *do* call upon the reader, male or female, to enter the psychodynamics of women's experience. Within the patriarchal structures of society, certain assumptions about appropriate female behaviour become prevalent—mothers are devoted to children, adultery is more sinful in a woman than in a man, a woman is the domestic centre, a man may come and go as he pleases, women are passive, men given to aggressive action. Such stereotypes occur throughout literature. Showalter's suggestion to examine literary texts from the woman's perspective can lead to surprising results.

Her own example is the opening paragraph of Hardy's *Mayor of Casterbridge*. The drunken Michael Henchard sells his wife and infant daughter to a sailor for five guineas at a country fair. Irving Howe, a revered male critic, comments on the passage by drawing attention to the droopping rag of a woman, her mute complaints and her maddening passivity. The male critic admires Henchard's 'sheer amoral wilfulness to wrest a second chance out of life.' The feminist critic, Showalter, condemns such a reading as an indulgence in the male fantasy of power, and demonstrates how the text changes meaning if we see the situation from the wife's point of view.[11] The text gives no evidence that Susan Henchard is a drooping rag; in fact, her passivity and silence are the only tools of protest available to her. She is as helpless and marketable as an American slave. Despite such derogation of women, Hardy's novel has seldom brought angry protest from its readers. The writer and the traditional critics have evoked sympathy for Henchard *because* of his crime, not in spite of it, and we, the readers, have accepted such a commentary because of our own cultural conditioning.[12] 'Gynocritics' teaches the modern reader to examine the notions of appropriate female behaviour, specially in the works of D.H. Lawrence, Norman Mailer and Ernest Hemingway, all firmly placed as classics of literature.

Gynocritics has a further application too. It may help us to find new books for the canon by shifting the perspective from male-centred to woman-centred texts. Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* makes an interesting case in point. Published in 1899, the novel, which dealt sympathetically with a woman's experience of adultery, was pushed into oblivion by irate critics and a penitent author. Though it attracted minor critical appreciation half a century later, the feminist reading of the novel brought it to prominence only in the 1970's.[13] *The Awakening* has been one of the major triumphs of feminist interpretation. By now the general critical opinion is so high that the novel may need no special pleading to give it a place in the new canon.[14]

Chopin tells the story of Edna Pontellier, twenty eight years old, married to a respectable Creole gentleman, and the mother of two little children. Edna has no particular cause to be dismayed by the institution of marriage, but she finds herself attracted to the youthful, easy-going Robert who, though a willing social escort, will not enter into an intimate relationship with a married woman. However, through her love for the absent, reluctant Robert, she awakens to the suppressed desires of her body and mind, and in a moment of sensual arousal yields to the attention of a different man, Arobin. For Edna, love, lust, and wifehood become three tragically separated experiences. When she realises the impossibility of bringing these experiences into a fine unification, she kills herself by drowning.

Chopin gave to Edna some bold statements on what feminists would call selfhood. She says, 'I would give up the unessential, I would give my money, I would give my life for my children but I wouldn't give myself.'[15] She is refusing the time-honoured role of the self-effacing 'motherwoman' but what she is adopting instead is unclear. Perhaps she is taking responsibility for her own choices, for her wilful rejection of what society values in marriage—security, comfort and protection for women. Her deep-seated sexuality seeks fulfilment outside marriage but no man in her life measures up to her expectation of a rich, composite love. Edna goes to her death understanding the inadequacy of her men and fearful of her impossible demands upon life. She says over and over again to herself, 'Today it is Arobin, tomorrow it will be someone else, it makes no difference to me.'[16] For her sensuality she is not apologetic; in fact, arousal of the body is her means to self-knowledge. By passing traditional sanctities yet again, Edna declares, 'there was neither shame nor remorse. There was a dull pang of regret because it was not the kiss of love which had inflamed her.'[17]

To students of literature, *The Awakening* invites comparison with other well-known novels of marital infidelity—Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, (1873-78), Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857), Henry James's *The Golden Bowl* (1903) and Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850)—all written by men. Does a woman writer's portrayal of adultery account for a difference? Not perhaps in theme and imaginative plot structuring but, I would sugges., in the final, tragic hopelessness of Edna's innately sensual nature. The woman novelist refuses to moralise the tale as Flaubert did, or to show a deteriorated self in the manner of Tolstoy and James. Chopin fastens on a moment in female destiny that comes close to Hawthorne's statement. Of Hester, Hawthorne says, 'the same dark question often rose into her mind, with reference to the whole race of womanhood. Was existence worth accepting, even to the happiest among them?'[18] The implied answer is 'No.' We notice, however, that despite similar speculations about tragic female destiny, the heroines of the male writer, Hawthorne, and the woman writer, Chopin, go different ways. Hester curbs her passionate nature to survive as a sad but useful member of society. Edna surrenders to her passionate nature, separates from society, and in utter solitude finds no cause to live. It is a strange truth about women's fiction in America that several self-contemplative heroines commit suicide rather than live with hypocritical values.[19] Why women's writing takes such directions gynocritics may help us understand.

Until recently, discussions about the canon and the evolving theory of gynocritics were expected to cover the primary demands of American feminism. However, a third development arises from the dissenting voice of black women writers who see themselves unrepresented in the terms of the new canon and the new methodology. Gender emphasis gave rise to feminism; the black women wish to add to gender the important issues of race and class. The black working-class woman has suffered the worst oppressions in American history. Belonging to the subjugated gender in the subjugated race, she has had to contend with exploitative demands from white masters as well as the black, masterly men. In the literary imagination of America, she has been repeatedly depicted as a large, matronly nanny, or as a curvaceous sex object. White writers as well as black are guilty of such gross simplifications. Angered by the neglect of mainstream feminism, the black women are grouping themselves under a different banner which denies even the vocabulary of the white race. Alice Walker calls this 'Womanism,' a philosophy quite distinct from white 'feminism' such as Showalter's. Walker, in the polemics of her essay 'In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens,'[20] and in the imaginative structuring of her Pulitzer prize winning novel, *The Color Purple*, sketches the terms by which 'womanism' may be understood. Black women in America share very little with their white counterparts except the most common experiences of gender prejudice. The black woman has been compelled by social disadvantage to become economically and sexually freer than the white woman. Moreover she has accepted the additional burdens of homemaking and child-rearing because gender tradition placed her in these roles. The black working-class woman is often a harassed drudge managing a brood of fatherless children in severely restricted domestic space. She lives in a community of other such women. The men are ancillary to her existence, they come and go as sexual partners. This reality of ghetto living has only now been portrayed from the woman's point of view in the writings of Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Gloria Naylor. The programme for 'womanism' is a reflection of gender stereotypes. It calls for an adoption of female power constituted from the real economic functioning of the black women. For resource and strength they turn to their community of women (what may be called female bonding), and to the roots of their native African culture. They deny the consolations of Christianity, which they say is a white imposition designed to teach passivity to the already subjugated class. They refuse the compromising arguments of racial integration as another 'white' lie, they also reject the James Baldwin kind of 'black' solution to return the race to its original habitation in Africa. The 'womanists' believe in the collective power of 'womanhood,' and call for the reordering of social, religious, economic, political and aesthetic priorities in these present, volatile years of gender dispute in America. A novel such as Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* tells us how this may be done. The cause of black feminism is adequately supported by the testament of history, and gains strength by foregrounding the major issues of race and class in addition to the talk of gender. Within the larger map of the women's movement in the twentieth century, black feminism is America's most vital and original contribution.[21]

Judging by the three trends in American feminism that I have emphasised, one can see the movement gathering force and subtlety as the years go by. From the aesthetics of the canon, to the emergence of a new methodology, to the politics of race, considerable advance has been recorded in two decades. True, there are divergences within feminism, but that itself is proof of a self-reflecting critical consciousness. Moreover, we are looking at literature through a generation that has paid tribute to deconstruction and declared the death of the author; therefore, no consensus holds ground for too long. In this environment, the disparate voices within feminism offer no cause for despair. As Elaine Showalter says in a recent essay, 'If in the 1980's feminist literary critics are still wandering in the wilderness, we are in good company, for as Geoffrey Hartman tells us, all criticism is in the wilderness.'[22] I would end on a more positive note to say that feminism is the one, current, critical theory that has returned literature to the texture of life and introduced an enlarged concept of humanism.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, ch. 24.
2. For a useful critical survey, see Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Methuen, 1985).
3. 'Method and Scope,' *American Renaissance* (New York: OUP, 1941). pp. vii-xvi.
4. Robert Spiller, et al, eds., *Literary History of the United States* (New York: Amerind Publishing Co., 1948), pp. xvii-xxiv.
5. Richard Chase, *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (New York: Doubleday, 1957); Charles Feidelson, *Symbolism and American Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952); R.W.B. Lewis, *American Adam* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1955).
6. 'Sentimental Power: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Politics of Literary History,' *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction: 1790-1860* (New York: OUP, 1985), pp. 122-46.
7. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, chs. 25, 26.
8. Ibid., ch. 45.
9. See Eric J. Sundquist, ed., *New Essays on 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'* (Cambridge: CUP, 1986).
10. 'Towards a Feminist Poetics,' in Mary Jacobus, ed., *Women Writing and Writing about Women* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), pp. 22-41.
11. Ibid.
12. See Jonathan Culler, 'Reading as a Woman,' *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (London: RKP, 1983), pp. 43-64.
13. Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976). See Chopin's 'Retraction,' p. 159; and Kenneth Eble, 'A Forgotten Novel,' pp. 165-70.
14. See 'Women Writers and the New Woman,' in Emory Elliott, gen. ed., *Columbia Literary History of the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 589-606.
15. *The Awakening*, ch. 16.
16. Ibid., ch. 39.
17. Ibid., ch. 28.
18. *The Scarlet Letter*, ch. 13.
19. See Edith Wharton, *A House of Mirth*, Sylvia Plath, *The Bell-jar*, Mary McCarthy, *The Group*.
20. Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983).
21. See Barbara Christian, *Black Feminist Criticism* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1985).
22. 'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness,' in Elaine Showalter, ed., *The New Feminist Criticism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985).

Tradition and the Emergence of the Modernist Temper in Post-Independence Hindi and Urdu Short Fiction

SUKRITA PAUL KUMAR

Human consciousness is a perpetually changing landscape, changing sometimes with abrupt earthquake-like movements and at other times, almost imperceptibly. The continuous mutative process gets recorded in the changing physical features, and the movement of the evolving consciousness gets charted through the creative articulation of this awareness in art and literature. Human intelligence takes cognizance of the new situation which affects, modifies and nourishes the human sensibility, relationships and life itself. Alongside, though it may be rather relative, there is the realization that the past is not only alive in the present, it has actually created the contours of the present; and that the present actually demonstrates the whole significance of life by simultaneously reflecting the outposts of existence in the past. This in fact can be termed the 'sense of traditions,' which is not merely the retaining in mechanical memory of what happened in the past; it is a memory that projects the significance and meaning of the past experiences in the 'now' itself. The essential experience of tradition then is the realization of the availability of 'all-time' in a single moment; the twentieth-century awareness of this human capability is a very important modern discovery. The very perception of reality undergoes a transformation with such triumphs of human exploration.

The cultural historical continuum gets connected with the individual artist's ego with this clearly defined perception which helped modernists such as Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot in stressing 'the impersonal and objective side of human experience.' The concept of time too was bound to get modified. In fact the definition of modern literature itself, then, acquires an extra-historical dimension; which is to say, that to insist on its strict association with a specific time frame or to see it only in a fixed moment of history may be rather inappropriate. However, the high aesthetic self-consciousness witnessed in England and Europe over the turn of the century cannot be dismissed as a mere breaking away from the familiar functions of language or the conventions of form. The de-creation and crisis of aesthetic styles actually manifests the modern thought and modern experience which is to see how modern art has a social and epistemological cause. The shift towards technique and form, from a mere realistic representation of life, in modern fiction shows the writer's deeper concern for human experience by exploring various levels of human consciousness. It is an expression of the historical opportunity granted to the perceptive artist by the new, post-First World War situation when civilization and reason are thrown aboard and the world has been reinterpreted by Marx, Freud and Darwin. Also, there is a constant industrial acceleration bringing radical changes in human values and perspectives.

Thus, modernism cannot be seen as mere licentiousness or artistic freedom; it is in fact art's necessity. The principles of variability, novelty and change characterize the new sensibility. Indeed, though the past may have caused the change, its pastness is at once recognizable. The artist confronts the risks and hopes of the impermanence of environment. That is to say that a heightened consciousness of the mutability of life is a typically modernist feature. All inter-personal relationships are suddenly perceived as transient. The positions to be worked out with the changing reality have always been the concern of the artist down the lanes of the history of man. But the understanding of the process of modernization is not merely dependent on abstract historical logic. The specificity of the accelerating pace of development, industrialization and scientific progress involves new forms of consciousness in its new kinds of expectations and aspirations. In that, the conventional pattern of thinking and the old frames of reference become irrelevant. 'The immense panorama of futility and anarchy' that Eliot saw in *Ulysses*[1] and Yeats's 'Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold' indicate a complete disorientation and total collapse of the old and the traditional. It is understandable, then, that the modernist should strive and search for a unity between the temporal and the timeless, 'the dancer and the dance.'

Relativism and scepticism having got injected into the human psyche in the modern times, the artist could not but feel the strange pressures of the new times and manifest them in new ways. The forces that emerge from the present had to be accommodated with those of the past. The medium of art is most appropriate for the synthesis of the two which is, in fact, taking a sensitive care of the 'sense' of tradition.

The post-World War I literary output is crucial to modernism in its manifestation of the mood of transition from the old to the new. In *The Sense of an Ending*, Frank Kermode suggests how the turning of a century itself has a strong 'chiliastic effect' in the reflection on history as revolution or cycle to consider the question of endings and beginnings, 'the going and coming of the world.'[2] The attempt to discern the moment of transition in itself becomes then a feature of the modernist sensibility. In 1915, D. H. Lawrence said, 'our idea of time as a continuity in an eternal straight line has crippled our consciousness cruelly.'[3] The logical consequence of this heightened consciousness of time is clearly demonstrated in such literary movements as the Symbolist movement wherein the historical sequence of events is intersected with the timelessness of the artistic revelation. The sequence of historical time preserved in 'realistic and naturalistic literature' seemed therefore to stand at cross purposes with the awareness of the immateriality of superficial reality.

The modern artist tended to work with a different consciousness and perspective. Marlow, the narrator in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, for instance, projects the modernist's enriched awareness of time. 'The mind of man,' he says, 'is capable of anything—because everything is in it, all the past as well as the future. What was there, after all? Joy, fear, sorrow, devotion, valour, rage—who can tell?—but truth—truth stripped of its cloak of time.'[4] For the new sensibility, the real basis of communication lay in the awareness of the shared, common and continuing human condition even within diverse environments, irrespective of the chronicity of time. Stephen Spender pointed out this phenomenon very well in his book *The Struggle of the Modern*, when he said that 'the liberated, unconditioned imagination had been restored in modern literature to its position of being a Verb.'[5] Indeed, the artist then takes a God-like position of being isolated within his own creative Universe and 'all time' becomes available to him all at once.

It is, in fact, in the capturing of such an apocalyptic moment that the writer triumphs, the moment in which an interrelatedness with nature and 'the other' is perceived, traditional concepts and beliefs are shed and linguistic categories are transcended. A novel kind of coherence and logic of the mind and its way of communicating complex and subtle ideas was discovered with the help of the Freudian theory of dreams. The 'dream' came to enjoy a special status, as it were, and the uncertainties of 'probability' upset the sovereignty of precise knowledge. The new concepts of 'a-logicality' and 'a-causality' created a climate for the questioning of absolutes. All this did not merely stop at a mere intellectual readjustment; the quickened, alert and 'multiplied' consciousness, in fact, endowed a spirit of 'exile' on the artist's sensitive sensibility. He felt distanced from local origins or class allegiances and acquired the perspective of an expatriate—an outsider.

But even though apparently modernism asserted a consciousness detached from the traditional sequence, it made full creative use of that loss of contact with linear historicity. What is interesting to note is that the awareness of this in itself became the premise for innovation. It lent a confident autonomy to the artist's imagination and self-expression. A definite faith in the creative act invested 'technique' with the power and capability of controlling the rather chaotic reality. Whether it be the work of Picasso, or Eliot, or Kafka, or the music of Stravinsky, the formal power of *method* is clearly demonstrated in their buoyant experimentalism with artistic devices and form.

Indeed, the modernist's domain of exploration has been mainly the inward and 'primitive' human psyche. The concern for severe formal control actually emphasizes the sense of the chaotic material reality the artist sought to sift and organize with a rigorous discipline. But absorbed in finding unique forms to express subjective perceptions, the modernists were isolated from one another as well as from their readers. The reaction against the rhetoric of the past was an obvious consequence when the writer regarded subjective experience increasingly as the only valid material for fiction. Literature became confessional and at times rather obscure. However, the 'specificity' of experience and subjective perceptions, on the one hand, and on the other, virtuosity in the structure and style of the art product, combined subtly to keep the modernist's concern for the imperative of impersonality. In that the Aristotelian and classical approach to art, which maintains 'universality' as the foremost appeal of art and literature, is taken care of. Success, therefore, lay in the simultaneous process of defining the self, on the one hand, and on the other, transcending it or reaching the 'essential' through it. With that, an effective communicability too gets established. Steven Helmling, in his essay on the prominent modernist James Joyce, makes a similar point when he says, 'To look for the universal in the most occluded wilds of the "personal" was only a more extreme form of Joyce's earlier aim to be both "impersonal" and "autobiographical." '[6] In tracing a logical development in the relation between the artist and his material, Joyce refers to what he calls the stage of epiphany; while the artist's personality recedes in the background, the objective image grows into an independent and complete aesthetic existence. Ezra Pound defined the depersonalization of art in terms of 'vorticism' to emphasize the 'self-propelling' quality in his artistic usage of 'imagism'. To recognize the internal dynamism within the artifact and the artist's self-conscious effort to achieve it is, in fact, a characteristically modernistic feature.

Goethe's idea of cultural 'utopianism' explicit in his *welt literature* (world literature) comes close to Matthew Arnold's concept of modernity[7], which was enlarged and was to now include whatever was rationally valid and relevant in the whole cultural heritage of mankind. Modernity, then, meant a synthesis of values employing free activity of the mind as well as a tolerance of divergent views. Matei Calinescu's definition of modernity, on the other hand, clearly refers to a culture of rupture and crisis. What is suggested, in fact, is that the sense of the modern is indicated through the internal signalling of a culture and is a significant aspect of human consciousness itself. In early twentieth-century literature, then, the idea of the modern as an imperative and a predicament manifests itself in the technical and emotional extremities. This feature of course ties up very well with Calinescu's concept of the modern which is related to a situation of cultural crisis. Thus, the writer's sense of reality transformed his very approach to language and form which is an organic part of an art-product.

The availability to the modern writer of new areas of the unconscious, through extensive research in psychology, provided him with perceptions into human behaviour hitherto unacknowledged. Alongside, the shared values of a 'unified culture', in which the meanings of life derived from communal symbols and beliefs, were crumbling. But, apart from what was happening from within the English tradition, the influence from and imitation of foreign cultures marked a phase of homogenization and internationalism. The assimilation of cross-cultural currents pointed towards the resurgence of a spirit of synthesis. But then the old 'Victorian Synthesis' was disturbed by a growing feeling of uncertainty and relativism, and the spirit of disaffiliation itself became a common and shared reality. That is to say that the process of homogenization rested strangely on a new perception defined by a rather doubtful approach to the secure social and religious heritage.

The phenomenon of Modernism which captured the western psyche and projected itself in various artistic media meant a deliberate break from the dominant modes of nineteenth-century literary forms and content. But that does not imply that it signified a total break with the past. In fact, as mentioned earlier, modernists like T.S. Eliot emphasized the sense of tradition. However, the insistence on 'change' and a search for new kinds of order was the major call of the 'modern' *litterateur.*

The urgency and expansiveness with which the feeling for the 'modern' spread afar was of course due to the new, effective and fast methods of communication. Totally alien cultures received the modernist ideas very easily, thanks to their exposure to Western civilization and knowledge through the English language. In India, the momentum for the turn of the historical wheel, that suggests the ushering of a new era, built up along with the movement for Independence. And, the people here were ready for an explosion of social forces. They were prepared with modernist ideas from the West when the partition of the country in the middle of the century led to rather traumatic experiences for a large number of people living in the northern regions of India. The context of crisis and rupture matched the climate of early twentieth-century Europe, though the circumstantial determinants here were indeed quite different. However, the emergence of the modernist temper and its manifestation in the fine arts around this time in India can be correlated easily with what was witnessed as modernism in the West, thirty or forty years earlier.

Many of the 'modern' themes dealing with the sense of misery in the civilized world, desperation, loneliness, and sacrifice of self and society to irrational forces began to show themselves as the serious concerns of the Indian writer who now experientially went through the sense of crisis so much present in the cultural environment of the West since long. In order to understand the rather easy receptivity of modernism in the Indian situation, it should be worthwhile to consider the famous Hindi literary critic, Ramdhari Singh Dinkar's approach to 'Modernity and Indian Religions.'[8] In late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century West, there was a marked intellectual concern for modernism's historical uniqueness. A detailed attention to the historical, philosophical and scientific milieu led to a comprehension of modernism as a vital expression of the new culture. What is crucial to note is that the birth of modernism was analysed essentially as a Western phenomenon. Thus, the social context in focus was either European or American. The Orient did not figure anywhere as a subject for the intellectual apprehension of modernism. When a similar sensibility appeared in the Indian context three decades or so later, it was bound to emerge with a difference, if only for the obviously varying cultural contexts. As Dinkar rightly points out, the modernist temper can be compared with that of the Buddhist age in India from many points of view. Buddha's revolutionary ideas and rather 'modern' approach to the caste system, to the status of woman, his agnosticism, scepticism and humanistic values and his essential faith in self-teaching and learning, all of this had a great impact on the mainstream of Indian culture and intellectual tradition.[9] Dinkar sees two main traditions in the base of Indian culture, the source of one being in the Vedic system and the other's in the Buddhist teachings revolving around humanistic concerns. While there is the tradition of Tulsidas, there is also that of Kabir; one is related to Manu and the other to Buddha. The hundred-year-long contact with and exposure to the European culture and religion did something very significant to the two diverse traditions of India. In one way, as Dinkar's thesis upholds, this contact brought the two streams together. The lives and teachings of such Indians as Ramakrishna Parmahans, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and Gandhi indicate the evolution of the Indian thought towards modern living. Pursuit of truth, irrespective of caste, religion or any other kind of biases, is the major feature of the 'new' spirit. The upsurge of science and technology is, in fact, the result of such an intellectual mood. The intellectual climate weeded out the bigoted and the superstitious which curbed the indomitable striving of man to confront the Real.

The external features of modernity are projected in the frantic process of industrialization, urbanization and even mechanization of human life affecting inter-personal relationships. It is to be noted that the source of motivation for modernization lies in the modern man's approach to life which demands a fearless exploration of his psychic as well as the external universe.

The World Wars in the West and the independence and partition of India established the proximity of death and created the realization that man is himself greatly responsible for these grotesque horrors. Just as the struggle for freedom came to an end, a new chapter of development and progress commenced. Under the banner of the Progressive Movement, Urdu writers such as Krishan Chander, Ismat Chughtai and Rajinder Singh Bedi were writing fiction committed to social realism. But as the critic Quazi Abdul Sattar rightly points out in his essay 'Contemporary Urdu Fiction,' the Progressive writers failed to respond aesthetically to some of the radical changes in the country then.[10] The abolition of zamindari changed the social and economic structure of 85 per cent of the population of the country living in villages. The Chinese aggression shook people's faith in dogmatic socialism just as the Soviet power received a shock with the Cuban crisis. But, perhaps, it was precisely through this rather disturbed phase that the balance was struck between a rigid ideological commitment and a totally free and open-ended modernity. Qurratulain Haider, Joginder Paul, G. Ahmed Gaddi, Ratan Singh, Ram Lal and some others in Urdu, and in Hindi such writers as Rajendra Yadav, Bhisham Sahni, Mohan Rakesh and Kamleshwar, in their short stories, reflected the 'modified' point of view. These writers are referred to as 'neo-progressive' by some, and others regard them as modernists; since the props of modernism had already been received from the West, it was not difficult for the Indian sensibility to realize and be aware of the 'change' to be able to take off as soon as the milieu of the country offered the opportunity.

The communal fury let loose at the time of the partition caused unprecedented dislocation and misery. What John Orr assiduously traces as 'absence'[11] inhabiting the characters in twentieth-century fiction, gets illustrated in the stories written around this time in Hindi and Urdu. This experience of a peculiar loss or an absence is derived from the alienation caused in the individual by an estrangement with his society, his community. Orr describes how this absence is caused: 'The absence of the other can be seen as a mirror of the absence of the subject within his or her own world.'[12] The void created by the 'absence' and the rather decentered self is the legacy of modernism which gets a conducive climate in India in the mid-twentieth century. The rootlessness, the trauma of displacement and the consequent refugee spirit injected in the new individual made him appear a rather dehumanized victim. Rajinder Singh Bedi, Bhisham Sahni and Manto wrote a number of stories on the theme of the division of the country. The decentered and sometimes paranoid characters grope for recuperation or wholeness which is indeed an abstract ideal.

The absence of a sustaining society actually caused the fragmentation of the psyche which could no longer be presented through traditional fiction wherein the image of order and harmony was maintained consistently. The communal hate, terror and massacre seemed to have scooped the Indian society of its compassion. Whether it is Saadat Hasan Manto's story 'The Dog of Tithwal,' Agyeya's 'No Revenge,' Krishan Chander's 'The Peshawar Express' or Bedi's 'Lajwanti,' they are stories in which the author attempts to reconstitute stability in an estranged world. It is at this point of history that in Hindi and Urdu short story, the seeds of modernism are sown.

The mood of resurgence, renewal and change set in. While the avant-garde literature in the West implied a sharp sense of militancy, progress and protest rather urgently and compellingly, in Hindi and Urdu it is not as radical. A category of Indian writers, however, did display an extraordinary sensitivity to the crisis in the nation then. Such themes as the shifting man-woman relationship, liberation to woman, the hero as 'outsider', alienation and an ironic, sceptic questioning of the existent traditional values evolved out of the new awareness. It was in the late 50s and the 60s that such Hindi writers as Nirmal Verma, Phanishwar Nath Renu, Krishna Sobti and in Urdu, writers such as Qurratulain Haider and Joginder Paul were gripped with the new concerns. The characteristically 'modernist' stance of their writings is a direct outcome of homogenization or synthesis of varied cultures taking place in the technologically progressive world in which the sophisticated methods of communication have brought diverse cultures together—through a regular give and take process and a free flow of cross-cultural streams.

The assimilation of major western philosophical movements in the Indian ethos is also, as mentioned earlier, due to political and socio-religious factors prevalent here. There is a large number of stories written here with an awareness of the existentialist theories of human life. What holds the attention of the reader in the fiction of the 50s is the writer's alertness as regards the contemporary situation. This indeed affects his presentation of inter-personal relations as well as modifies his approach to the art form itself. Not only does the content *demand* a certain art form, it actually determines it. The subtle changes effected in the language by the new environment and by scientific inventions and new thought processes indicated their influence on human behaviour and even modes of feeling. T.S. Eliot's line 'HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME' from *The Waste Land* characterizes this reality very well.

Stephen Spender points out that it is not scientific knowledge but its effects which become part of the experience of modern life.[13] The idea of progress which goes with 'scientific culture' ironically resulted in a spiritual malaise in the western modernist world. This is evident amply from the reactions of Eliot and others. The following passage from Spender spells this out very well.

> If the literary intellectuals seem sceptical of the benefits produced by science, one reason may be that so many scientific advances seem to result in a deadening of consciousness. I mean by this, they destroy life-memory, which is not mechanical memory, but is memory of the kind that can retain significant experiences—can cultivate awareness of consciousness before our day. Such judging and comparing and savouring memory is the essential quality of full and complex consciousness. Instead of our living in an extremely complex present moment, packed as it were with experiences of the past related to immediate ones, technology enables more and more people to live in a single-strand moment, receiving the latest sensation, which obliterates previous impressions. The literary intellectuals are, it is hoped, those who have attained the greatest degree of that subjectivity or self-awareness which is also awareness of the potentiality of such mental and spiritual living in others, so that in being most individual it is most representative of human consciousness.[14]

The modernist who is acutely conscious of the contemporary scene does not really accept the new values, if any. His predicament seems to revolve around the inability to sever himself from tradition or the vital sense of the past; nor is he able to ignore his commitment to the present. The gulf between the two has to be bridged. Whether it is Picasso and his creation 'Guernica', or Joyce and his *Ulysses*, the modernist seems to somehow bring about a fusion between the past and the present by closely interpreting the classical imagery and myths in contemporary terms.

The 'present' carried within itself a vast ocean of 'new knowledge' which somehow had to be accommodated and adjusted with the past. The present was to be confronted along with its past. It is perhaps at this point that the existentialists became relevant, the existentialists who thought intensely of the scope of the experience of the self in space as well as time. The expansive capacities of human consciousness are philosophically apprehended. The Delphic maxim 'know thyself' upheld even by the remotest forebears of existentialism such as Socrates, K. Guru Dutt remarks in *Existentialism and Indian Thought*, is the keynote of all Indian philosophy, including the Buddhist and Jaina Darsanas.[15] The urge towards inwardness which was fully manifest in St. Augustine, marks all existential thought from Pascal to Sartre. The same is seen also as the main concern in Indian thought. Of course a lot of confusion has been caused which can be further compounded by our effort to bring out affinities between existentialism and Indian thought. To elicit correspondence between Sanskrit and European terminologies may cause utter chaos since in any case they emerge out of diametrically diverse cultures with altogether different philosophic bases. However, a careful and meticulous examination of the two streams of consciousness may even prove helpful in perceiving a delicate and profound similarity.

For instance, K. Guru Dutt's close and comparative scrutiny brings out some common concerns such as 'authenticity of experience', 'freedom of the self,' and 'detachment'. The forlornness, the aloneness of the self, and the experience of anguish and despair often presented as the prominent features of the human condition in existential literature, are conditions preceding to any spiritual realization in Vedanta as well as in Buddhism. So, in effect, the European thought-current of the early twentieth-century really found a kindred temper on the Indian sub-continent.

Moreover, in the post-Independence Indian context, people were prepared to receive new ideas, thanks to the ramifications of the experience of uprootment in the 1950s. The cataclysmic effects caused a climate which matched very well with the Eliotesque philosophic mood three decades earlier in the West. The hopefulness and ebullience that the hard-earned freedom from the British rule should have brought was subordinated totally by the partition trauma. The unfortunate assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, too, led to an utter disillusionment of the few triumphant idealists.

The mental unsettledness, a sense of not belonging and being blown about by political ill-winds, caused a historic turning point in the Indian sensibility and the ethos. In *Writings on India's Partition*, the editors, Ramesh Mathur and Mahendra Kulasrestha, have collected samples of creative writing produced at that time, most of them Hindi and Urdu short stories translated into English. Rajinder Singh Bedi's story 'Lajwanti' ('touch-me-not,' the plant whose leaves fold up if touched) deals with the theme of rehabilitation of women abducted during the riots of 1947. In fact, what the story sensitively suggests is that though these women may be rehabilitated through the intensive campaign of 'rehabilitating them in your hearts,' it is almost impossible for the men to accept them for normal relationships. I quote from the story: 'She looked at her own body which had, since the partition, become the body of a goddess. It no longer belonged to her.'[16] Lajwanti, thanks to the zealous propaganda of the Rehabilitation of Hearts Committee, does get rehabilitated, even back into the heart of her husband, Sunder Lal, but ironically, not as a woman or a wife, but as a goddess; while 'She wanted him to be the same old Sunder Lal with whom she quarrelled over a carrot and who appeased her with a radish. Now there was no chance of quarrel. Lajwanti would gaze for hours at herself in the mirror but she could no longer recognize the 'Lajo' she had known.'[17] Bedi's depiction of Lajwanti's experience of alienation from her own self, the radically modified attitude of Sunder Lal and the shifting man-woman relationship when nothing could be taken for granted now, project indeed a change in the writer's perception of reality. Bhisham Sahni, Mohan Rakesh, Saadat Hasan Manto, Ajyeya, K.A. Abbas, Ashk, are some writers who have responded creatively to the scene of absurd killings and the holocaust of the partition riots. They focus on the indignity of human behaviour and, in that, salvage some human dignity in their delicate depiction of emotion and the need for human relatedness. The insignificance of human life, the meaninglessness of human action, the utter lack of respect for life, aroused the writer to deal with some fundamental questions pertaining to man's existence and his relationship with the universe.

The process of change and modernization could no longer be manifested only in socialist-realist writing. New literary grounds were broken under the influence of Camus, Sartre and Kafka, wherein the preoccupation with 'absurdity', guilt, anguish, failure to communicate and revolt was projected. Krishan Baldev Vaid, Gyanranjan, Kashinath Singh and some others in Hindi; and B. Manra, Surendra Prakash, Joginder Paul, Q. Haider in Urdu, wrote stories in which the breakdown of the family, the impermanence of homes, the absurdity of the human, 'civilized' world and the exploration for a vital human existence were dominant themes. There is a vision of man as a non-hero who becomes an insect in Kafka's story 'Metamorphosis'.

Modernism in Hindi and Urdu short story springs from such a climate and mood. This of course ties up with the basic Indian philosophic and cultural heritage capsuled in Shankarcharya's *Anatmasrivigarhana stotra:*

> *Labdh vidy , r jam ny tatan kim*
> *yena sv tm naiva s ks tkrtobhüt*

(If one has acquired knowledge accepted and honoured by the kings, so what? If one has not realized his own self then of what use is anything else?)

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, eds., *Modernism: 1890–1930* (Harmondsworth, 1976), p. 26.
2. Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending* (London & New York, 1966).
3. D.H. Lawrence, *Apocalypse* (London, 1932), pp. 97–98.
4. Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Penguin edition (Harmondsworth, 1983), p. 69.
5. Stephen Spender, *The Struggle of the Modern*, Methuen Paperbacks (London, 1963), p. 17.
6. Steven Helmling, 'Joyce the Irresponsible,' *The Sewanee Review*, Vol 94 (Summer 1986), 470.
7. Metei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity* (Durham, 1987), p. 91.
8. Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, *Aadhunik Bodh* (Hindi Book Centre, 1973), pp. 5–19.
9. Ibid., p. 6.
10. Quazi Abdul Sattar, 'Contemporary Urdu Fiction,' *Seminar on Creative Writing in Indian Languages*, Marathawada University, (Aurangabad, 1972), p. 70.
11. John Orr, *The Making of the Twentieth-Century Novel: Lawrence, Joyce, Faulkner and Beyond* (New York, 1987), p. 13.
12. Ibid.
13. Spender, p. 59.
14. Ibid., pp. 60–61.

15. K. Guru Dutt, *Existentialism and Indian Thought* (Bangalore, 1953), p. 60.
16. Rajinder Singh Bedi, 'Lajwanti,' *Writings on India's Partition*, ed. Ramesh Mathur and Mahendra Kulsrestha (Delhi, 1976), p. 135.
17. Ibid.

Misogyny, Misanthropy, Modernism: T.S. Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'

JAIDEV & PANKAJ K. SINGH

Deconstruction in practice relies on three basic concepts. First, there is no absolutist, essentialist or logocentric meaning in a discourse, for the semiotic universe is decentred, characterized by difference. Secondly, in all discourse, certain structural components get arbitrarily privileged at the expense of others which are therefore arbitrarily marginalized or erased. This happens inevitably due to structural imperatives. While there is no escape from such arbitrary privilegings and marginalizations, a deconstructionist resists the discourse and its 'centralizing' thrust to recover or re-claim the marginalized components, if only to see the other, neglected side of reality. In addition, the deconstructionist is then interested to discover (dis-cover) the motivation behind the privilegings and marginalizations; and this motivation can be both private and ideological. Finally, all discourse is presumed to be opaque, evasive, self-contradictory (in spite of itself) at certain points—mainly due to the disjunction between the contingent universe of phenomena and the ordered universe of signs and structures. These opaque points have been termed by Derrida *aporias*. The deconstructionist brings these points to a boil, to a crisis, as it were, and then organizes his resistant reading of the discourse around them. The result is expected to reveal what the discourse attempts to conceal. In short, under every overt text, one can find one or many latent sub-texts. As in a palimpsest, the erased meanings occupy the attention of the deconstructionist, and these meanings or sub-texts can be retrieved by following the *aporias* somewhat extremely, somewhat irreverently. One's commitment to the erased meanings is not qualitatively different from one's concern for the marginalized aspects, and it is easy to see how subversive in its potential deconstruction can be in the realm of, say, political discourse.

The present paper is a micro-exercise and isolates a few *aporias* in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' for the purpose of branching out to certain macro-conclusions which, we feel, have a fairly general applicability both to Eliot's poetry and modernism in literature. These *aporias* are: 1. the use of the word 'you' (as in the first line: 'Let us go then, you and I'); 2. the 'meaning' motifs (as in 'It is impossible to say just what I mean!'); 3. the cluster of 'speech', 'saying', 'communicating' motifs along with its other, i.e. 'silence' motif; and 4. the use of allusions and literary echoes and parodies. In the analysis of these motifs, it is to be shown that several modernist attitudes coalesce around the polarity which the poem establishes between the self and the other. The other is 'you' and this 'you' is open to several contradictory readings, though interestingly the contradictory meanings of 'you' are ultimately subsumed within a most extended 'you' which signifies the world in general, the world of real beings who are treated with much contempt by the self-righteous, egotistic 'I'. So that if the poem is taken to be an early paradigm of High Modernism in Europe, its misogyny and misanthropy fit modernistic Narcissism, elitism, self-reflexivity, and what Frederic Jameson has called (in his definition of modernism) 'strategies of inwardness.'[1] These aspects, in turn, have implications for our understanding of Eliot whose several formal virtues nevertheless seem to conceal an attitude and ideology which needs to be approached with certain amount of caution, especially in the Third World.

II

'You' as Woman: Eliot's Misogyny[2]

William Empson listed seven types of ambiguity, and the suggestion all through his book was that ambiguity was a formal, poetic virtue, similar to Cleanth Brooks' paradox, or I.A. Richards' pseudo-statement. A recent book, Allon White's *The Uses of Obscurity*, argues that modernism arose because the dialectic of writing and reading, production and reception, were crucially altered by the writer's resorting to obscurity as a kind of semiotic defence against the new, sophisticated reader who was capable of performing 'symptomatic readings.'[3] Eliot's poem assiduously cultivates ambiguity and obscurity right from its very first line where the addressee, 'you', could be, should be, a woman, but need not be. It could just as well be a male friend with whom J. Alfred Prufrock is planning an orgy in some cheap hotel. One critic has suggested that the 'you' refers to the singer's repressed self.[4] If we assume that this you is the beloved of the male lover (for the poem claims to be a love song), the poem turns out to be a very curious misogynist discourse in which male egotism is rampant and the woman is consistently, cruelly erased. What strikes one is the poem's refusal to give any solidity, reality or specificity to her. The attempt to neutralize the sex of 'you' is further reinforced by Prufrock's lack of interest in her or her features. We get to know so much about him: his arms and legs, his balding head, his learning and attitudes, his tastes and susceptibilities and moods; but the female is denied any sign of being there. Eliot seems to prefer ambiguity to a woman. This may suggest a fear of women, and it is quite in conformity with his malice towards women in general. The 'then' in 'Let us go then, you and I' glows with exasperation—Prufrock has no illusions about the evening, streets or people. He has seen all. The woman is naive and un-understanding, because she seems to be insistent.

> Oh, do not ask, 'What is it?'
> Let us go and make our visit.

The tone here is snappish. She cannot be allowed to raise a question. The woman's question which might express a will towards mutuality and communication by virtue of seeking conversation is anticipated and aborted even before she has asked it. The finality of Prufrock's tone is meant to shut out and intimidate the woman. Such a finality is typically masculine and it is possible to view it as 'a sign of fear rather than confidence.'[5] The questioning form, as several feminists have noted, suggests openness towards others, sociability, generosity, a desire for response, and flexibility; it is not merely a polite form or a sign of tentativeness. The woman's possible question in the poem is snapped with a firm, authoritative, pre-emptive closure which is masculine. What is more, this closure is elevated to a superior level. In fact, it looks like the weak one snubbing the other in order to cover his own weakness.

The next 'female' image in the poem is overtly derogatory towards the women in the cafe room.

> In the room the women come and go
> Talking of Michelangelo.

The 'come and go' suggests vulgar rumour mongers and time wasters. Partly, of course, Eliot's contempt is directed at them for their trivializing Michelangelo. Culture, Eliot would argue, is decaying because women talk of Michelangelo, when perhaps they should be cooking traditional food in their kitchens. But partly also, their coming, going, and talking suggests their love of ugly gossip.[6] The tone is one which is used for characterizing someone addicted to assassinating character or reputation. It is presumably for having to encounter such faces as these women's that the superior, self-righteous hero has to go to so much bother and prepare a false face. The women are trivial, gossipy, uncultured, and in order to cope with them, man has to falsify himself. He cannot be himself if women come and go around him.

It is likely that Prufrock imagines himself to be a latter-day John the Baptist not because of the latter's association with Christ but because women caused the severing of his head. The earlier threat of the woman's question subjectively blends with the waitress's placing his orders on Prufrock's plate and together the two, the question and the orders, link up with his John the Baptist fantasy. The result is a grotesque image in which the question, the dish, and the fantasy equate Prufrock with John's head and women with Salome and her mother. Even a question supposed to be formed in a woman's head can have such violent, traumatic consequences for the man's head. Indeed, Christian mythology is inducted here to give a mythical, timeless dimension to woman's nature.

The sexual separatism is further strengthened as the poem advances. Prufrock is a man, and therefore he can think of time, vision, prophecies, the universe, and of course love. Women merely gossip and they pin men down violently, bloodily.

> The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
> And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
> When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
> Then how should I begin. . . .

The reference here is to women's eyes, arms, hands, etc. These are all viewed as murderous. Self-pity is man's lot. This is unfair, to say the least, for it is after all Mr J. Alfred Prufrock who has been fixing women in reductive, formulated phrases. But then this is precisely one of the uses of women: they serve as the rubbish can in which men can transfer their own low habits, traits and complexes. Prufrock diminishes and degrades all women, and then accuses them of trying to keep him pinned and wriggling on the wall like a worm or an insect. Women are them, and the companion 'you' is part of them. 'Them' denotes the site on which to land one's own male infirmities so that afterwards one could disown them by pretending that these have been women's natural attributes. Even if Prufrock digresses, the fault lies in 'perfume from a woman's dress.' Faced with women's arms or shawls, poor Prufrock feels he would have been happier as 'a pair of ragged claws/Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.' Silence is privileged here, as opposed to the potentially askable question from the woman. There is silence in the sea, and in the silence there is peace. The world is hell because it contains women who come and go and talk and can ask questions, can seek communication.

Again, if Prufrock cherishes the illusion of having known or seen all, if he imagines he has the ability to tell all, he is not going to do anything. He will keep silent, for he cannot presume anything about women. He is quite certain that women will never grasp any disturbing or significant knowledge. So why bother? They expect only to hear of worthless, trivial matters.

> Would it have been worthwhile
> If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
> And turning toward the window, should say:
> 'That is not it at all,
> That is not what I meant, at all.'

Prophecy or any disquieting knowledge is not at all something that women wish to be told. This is insulting as a presumption, but it also assumes that given a more appreciative audience, Prufrock could tell something serious or great. In fact, Prufrock assumes too much about himself. And while it is true that he frequently deflates himself as well ('I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be' or 'I am no prophet'), the paradoxical truth about this 'masculine' love song is that his self-deflations have the effect of rendering him an individual of importance and significance. 'You' by contrast is either wholly dematerialized or else viewed as belonging to the violent and bloody 'them.'

As in much of Eliot's poetry, in the poem woman is situated as man's other. The two are viewed as mutually exclusive; they do not meet or interact. This sexism is not just temperamental in Eliot; it is also fortified intellectually, through his arbitrary 'readings' of myths and history. Woman is the other: she becomes vulgar because one has the monopoly of culture; she talks of Michelangelo while one appreciates him; she dances while one loses one's head; if one connects with her, one loses redemption. Better isolation in the silent sea, in the company of mythic, literary or fantasy figures.

Of course, this arbitrarily conceptualized, notional other must be fortified against the charge of being a blatant lie which it obviously is. To sustain one bad myth, Prufrock fabricates another seemingly positive but actually no better myth, the myth of the divine other. This myth has woman as something unreal, celestial, infinitely desirable. In this myth, she is Mother Mary or a pack of mermaids. Such a celebration of woman is always managed in a timeless ethos. Mother Mary is beyond time, mermaids are reputed to have sung to Ulysses but they no longer sing. The glory that was woman is not here, not now, which in practical terms means neither here nor there. The good other is a means of legitimating the bad other, the material other who has been located in time and place. More than Eliot's engagement with the Indian Upanishads, it is this sexist ideology that brings him close to India.

'You' as the Common Reader: Self-reflexivity and Eliot's Modernism

The sexist polarity tells us a good deal about Eliot the poet, but it does not lead us into the heart of his modernism. To approach this, we have to do another, different reading of the poem, by going back to the 'you' of the first line. Since there is little love in the poem, such a 'misprision' is justified by the *aporia* around 'you'. For this different reading, we assume the most obvious: the poem is a message addressed to the reader or receiver. The self-other polarity then, predictably, operates at the expense of the reader who is viewed as the other. Of course, even the most exclusive, elitist poem must postulate a reader, but there is much pure contempt in Eliot towards the general or common reader. It was part of the programme of modernism to keep the common reader out of poetry. Poetry was only for the initiates, and perhaps it is instructive to note here that Eliot had nothing but utter contempt for the ninety-nine per cent of even such an 'appreciative,' initiated minority.[7] If the 'you' is taken to be the poor reader, then the poem turns into a self-reflexive poem, a poem which insets within its body several aesthetic, formal issues so that is at the same time both a poem and a metapoem. These formal issues have much relevance to the issue of modernism in literature.

'The Love Song' is a self-reflexive text. Its deliberately parodic title is a self-reflexive signal about what the poem is to do to a whole tradition of love poems. Its parodic-subversive intent is further confirmed by the *Inferno* epigraph as well as by its unlovely details like the etherised, patient-like evening. The strategy is to shock the reader out of any routine expectations which the 'Love Song' in the title may have generated. Here is a love poem against its forebears, but here is also a poem against the common reader whom it does not so much shock as shut out. Parody and self-reflexivity are the naive, common reader's scourge. Prufrock insinuates questions in the mouth of this reader and then snubs him cruelly. 'Oh, do not ask, "What is it?" Let us go and make our visit.' Prufrock's slick evasions are posited as the right stance and make the reader feel small for his normal question about the nature of the poem or the visit. At the self-reflexive level, the poem dramatises quite a formal comedy of manners. 'You' is the reader who has to be lashed out of his silly, human assumptions about poetry. Poetry is not related to life, but to previous poetry which it subverts and parodies for establishing its own being, its *raison* *d'être*. 'You' therefore is a fool for he brings extraneous, moral considerations and questions. The logic is foolproof, but circular. For at the self-reflexive level, 'you' is as much a word as is Prufrock. Why questions then? Prufrock is a word, his song a string of words. He is a verbal construct: formal, stylized, autotelic, out to draw attention to his verbal, self-directed energies and meaning nothing. He is a revolutionary supposedly out to renovate the language and love poetry, subverting all existing edifices to construct a new one, singing out loud a love song whose constant refrain is against meaning, against the possibility of communication, celebrating noisily the desirability of silence. Hamlet's problem, we recall, was not of meaning but of having to camouflage it under a torrent of words. Prufrock's problem is how to make words go and multiply and yet stay virgin in the sense of staying unmeaning; his problem is to use words and yet not to generate communication. For a poem is a poem is mere words. But if you demand that words or lines stay human, you are guilty of a humanistic fallacy, you have not yet developed an appropriate, pertinent response to literaturized, non-communicative words. You are, then, the other, the common reader. You are despised because you want to reach out to meaning, sometimes even with human questions. You are despised because you are not content with clever literary echoes and parodies. You are expected to learn quite early that Prufrock's universe is parodic, pastiche, privatized. Forster in *A Passage to India* contrasts echoes against communication; the contrast is already there in 'The Love Song' but with this important difference: echoes here are literary and they are privileged, whereas communication is denounced as something vulgar, unpoetic, low—something sought in life, by others.

Let us follow the literary echoes vs. communication trail a little farther. A poem, it seems, is a pitiable thing, because no matter how hard one struggles, *a la* Quentin Compson, to isolate its being from the world of people and meaning, it still relates to that world. There is no virginally pure poetry, there is just no way one can abstract this Caddy from the quotidian contexts. There is just no way by which a word like evening or smoke or cat can be washed of its meaning. But still one wages a heroic battle to reverse the biological imperatives and turn the poem into an immaculate virgin. Eliot seeks to do it through intertextuality, a near cousin of self-reflexivity. Self-reflexivity snubs down all worldly connexions; intertextuality abstracts the words away from the world into the literary past. Unmeaning results, but then this unmeaning is a pure void of literary echoes, away from the nuisance of communication and communication-seekers. The logic in the above-described virginity-retrieval operation is the logic of much sanctified formalism-modernism, and its aestheticism is its self, which despises the world of reality and communication as its other.

The echoes in 'The Love Song' come from the Bible, Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Donne, Marvell, etc. so that the poem is mainly about past literature, an exercise in bricolage in which bricks and bits from the past are re-arranged to improvise a new song. Now, what kind of a stance does the poem strike towards this literary, genealogically-acceptable, past? The stance is schizophrenic, disjunctive, signifying localized, parodic recalls which do not cohere into any significant, cogent statement or pattern about that literary past. The sense of history is missing in this past, and that, in fact, is the problem with Eliot's tradition. This tradition is a highly private, eccentric affair. The desire to appropriate and enclose the literary past is natural in many writers. But in Eliot, the attempt is to appropriate the past by de-realizing it, by destroying its significance-generating humanity and continuity. Literature is not private, but its use gets privatized.

The logic behind Eliot's intertextuality and tradition is the logic of pastiche. Decontextualize old texts from their human and socio-cultural ethos, treat them as dehumanized, inert objects, fracture them, scramble the pieces—and thus create a medley which apparently is not all yours at the level of content, but which is actually your own, your private menagerie, for the most foregrounded thing is not the matter but the strange combinatorial and parodic skills that you have employed. Eliot has often talked of tradition in relevance terms[8] but like his tradition, the relevance is also exclusively Eliot's. This is the kind of improbable feat by which Eliot privatizes the public past. Intertextuality in Eliot is not a means of connecting with the literary past; rather, it is a compensation for his severing of the link that exists even in the literary past between life and literature. This can be resented even by an Eliotesque initiate, for it suggests deprivation: he is being denied the humanity of the literary past, and also he is not being allowed to share Eliot's tradition. A desire to share even the literary past invites contempt. But then sharing and communicating are contemptible activities in the poem. The poem is consistently privileging isolation and silence and diminishing the value of sharing and communication. 'Our visit' is actually Prufrock's private visit; us is merely Prufrock. 'You' is a joke. 'You' is derealized, posited as the ugly other. 'You' should not ask what it is, for Prufrock feels that 'It is impossible to say just what I mean!' The desire for aloofness and isolation at the thematic level gets reinforced at the formal, self-reflexive level by the parodies, literary echoes and intertextuality which do recall the literary past but fracture it in such a whimsical fashion that it cannot be shared even by the most literary reader.

However, even a poem against communication does communicate something, if in spite of itself. Eliot knows this and takes precautions against the intrusion of meaning. Prufrock anticipates a lot and aborts all questions even before they can be articulated by the reader, 'you'. The poem creates an immutable polarity of self vs. others, and others are those despicable creatures who seek communication in art. Alienation is not a predicament but a cherished value as well as a favoured practice. Hell is other people. 'The Love Song' is most probably sung—or thought to be sung—before a life-size mirror, to Prufrock's own reflection, not really addressed to any outside addressee. Indeed, hell is also everything that is outside Prufrock. The evening is compared to an etherised patient, and the smoke to a cat. Here, the images are the most foregrounded things; they are conceits which virtually displace their genetic causes in the objective world. The poem has little reference to the society of the time, unless one is naive enough to confuse rolled trousers, coffee spoons or some St. Louis shop with realism. Its reference is only to a highly subjectivized, fantasticated society, a privatized grotesque vision which is produced by an all-devouring, spongy ego which has interiorized objective reality only to spit it out wholly salivated with its own private fears and terrors—for him to claim afterwards that he has seen them all, known them all. If this sounds like a nightmare, the nightmare is not outside but within. This is modernist, but its social reference is gratuitous and unearned. What could Prufrock have seen or known? No sooner does he think of the outside or others than he starts derealizing them but also himself. He cannot stay human there, he starts wishing to be a pair of ragged claws. He cannot suffer the world of real beings because they threaten to pin him down. It is an egotist's self-portrait, done in the colours of acute, paranoid egotism. The technique of this portrait resembles the stream-of-consciousness technique, but there is need to realize that that technique is basically suited to highly introverted, lonely, alienated characters.[9]

The others in time and space resist appropriation by Prufrock, and therefore they are dismissed as violent, ugly others. Prufrock, like Eliot, is haunted by Donne's 'The Relique' whose braceleted bone here finds an echo in 'Arms that are braceleted and white and bare.' These literary arms are Prufrock's intertextual armour to keep reality away. Hamlet is appropriated by Prufrock as a desirable other. Like Hamlet, Prufrock feels the time is out of joint. He regrets that the mermaids who sang for Ulysses will not sing to him, for the time is out of joint. He deserves to live in literature, in literary past, as if he did not! Even ironies in the poem are self-reflexive. The desirable, adorable sounds for him are not real or human, but literary; these are the songs of mermaids or of Ophelia. All that is here and now is mere noise, mere gossip about Michelangelo. Reality is hell, but it is also a sure death. The real are the human voices, and they can drown him: '. . . human voices wake us, and we drown.' Reality is deadly, while literary fantasy is oxygen. This edification of fantasy, especially literary fantasy, is intrinsic to modernism and it is managed by reducing reality to the other. This edification has its concomitant in suppressing whatever feeble social conscience one may have, for that conscience is the other, too, and is treated as a bad liability and embarrassment. This is why, much of modernism and formalism, avowedly or otherwise, is literary, elitist, and misanthropic, anti-people.[10] Indeed, its use of past literature is a bad use, too. Literature, here, is 'abused' as in all pastiche for it is arbitrarily set as an armour against life and humanity. An arbitrary either/or polarity makes past literature self and turns life and humanity into the other. The polarity is not genuine at all, but perverse. *Hamlet* may be self-reflexive, but it is not egotistic; nor does it abolish meaning or deny the role of language in human affairs. Prufrock hates both meaning and human affairs.

IV

Too much should not be made of Eliot's plea that modern poetry has to be difficult. Poetry can be difficult and yet stay human, humanistic. Here, difficulty becomes a pretext for covering up the poet's misogyny and misanthropy. Difficulty as such is aligned with decadence. Nor should we accept uncritically Eliot's celebrated concept of impersonality. That Prufrock is not Eliot is only as obvious as, say, that Gulliver is not Swift. But still there are connexions as well as differences between the poet and the poem. Our readings of the poem, we hope, have shown that there is something fundamentally sexist and anti-people in Eliot's poem and also that its latent realities are reflective of some of the ideological realities of modernism in literature. In these ideological realities culture is a frieze in the past, not praxis, all ordinary human beings, including women, are rubbish, all ordinary readers unworthy of the republic of letters, all social and moral concerns unaesthetic and ugly, all meaning and communication is inferior. Literature, according to this ideology, should be self-reflexive, should be about itself. If one translates this literary ideology into political terms, then it appears to be staunchly status-quoist, elitist, and pro-establishment. These implications deserve attention before we take to celebrating the modernist Eliot's modernist-formalist virtues in terms that have been used for canonizing him in the West.[11]

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Fredric Jameson discussed in Denis Donoghue, 'The Promiscuous Cool of Postmodernism,' *New York Times Book Review*, 22 June 1986, 36.
2. Misogyny is pervasive in Eliot's poetry. He introduces schismic attributes along the sexist lines in *The Waste Land*. The first three sections in the poem stress women or their voices fairly specifically; these sections concretise the theme of emotional sterility and nihilism. Men's speeches are distinguished from women's at the qualitative level, women's words being more of a pointless, unself-aware kind. Women are viewed as inferior to men, except in the case of the lower classes where both are equally damned, though even there the attitude of men towards women is reductive and patronising. The rich setting of the upper-class woman in 'A Game of Chess' is an indirect comment on the inner vacuum and aridity of the woman. The man looks trapped and keen to get away. Her questions fleet around, getting no response as though these were mere irrelevancies. It is interesting to note that Tiresias would not look grotesque at all were it not for the single detail that is listed for our contemplation, i.e. the 'wrinkled female breasts' or 'wrinkled dugs.' Add a female detail and a character turns grotesque. The mockery of women comes early in 'The Fire Sermon' with the ironic repetition of 'The nymphs are departed.' It is only women who play a game of chess, gossip, steal a husband or stoop to folly. If Carthage seems to burn with lust, women are responsible. Man has the chance of turning a saint, or at least a reconstructionist. It is interesting to note that in the last two sections of *The Waste Land* women are conspicuous by their absence. This seems to be so because the world in these sections has a religious air, and crucial issues are at hand—the curse might be lifted, the conditions of redemption might be announced by the Thunder. In such a world, Eliot can find no place for women. 'Portrait of a Lady' (in spite of its Jamesian title) deploys much crushing irony against the lady whom it reduces to a mere pathetic thing. 'Morning at the Window' has the sickening image of 'damp souls of housemaids sprouting at the gates' as though they were mushrooms. 'Hysteria' projects the woman's laughter as a sinister trap in which the male hero

is imprisoned. 'Burbank with a Baedeker: Blestein with a Cigar' is a satire on the ominously-named Princess Volupine. 'Sweeney Erect' portrays the woman's things as sickles and teeth, and 'Sweeney Among the Nightingales' shows the whores as potentially capable of homicide—the modern variants of Clytemnestra. In history, woman is seen either as Cleopatra because of whom Hercules deserted Antony or as Queen Elizabeth, the splendid but sterile and immoral lady. In 'Gerontion' history is fickle, deceiving, confusing, and dangerous—and its qualities are minimised. History is dangerous because it is a woman. Examples can be multiplied.

3. Cf. White: 'The decay of realism and the growth of symptomatic reading were inexorably linked and between them the writer was left oddly vulnerable to the public gaze.' White's reference is largely to early modernists like James, Conrad and Meredith, but the diagnosis is applicable to modernism in general. *The Uses of Obscurity: The Fiction of Early Modernism* (London: RKP, 1981), pp. 4-5.
4. G. Williamson, *A Reader's Guide to T.S. Eliot : a poem-by-poem analysis*, rev. ed. (London: Thames & Hudson, 1967), p. 59.
5. Marilyn French, *Beyond Power: On Women, Men, and Morals* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985), p. 477.
6. Woman's talk is consistently treated as gossip, hysteria, and irrelevancy in Eliot's early poetry. This 'linguistic misogyny,' as Gilbert and Guber term it, is shared by Eliot with other modernist writers such as Faulkner, Joyce and Lawrence. All these attacked 'such creative or intellectual women, and they were often attempting to do so specifically by castigating what they defined as the incoherence or destructiveness of female language.' Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Guber, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century* (London: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 236.
7. See Eliot's letter to Ezra Pound, dated 30 August 1922, rpt. in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 22-29 October 1988, 45. Cf. Eliot: '99 per cent of the people who "appreciate" what one writes are undisguisable shits and that's that.'
8. T.S. Eliot's Introduction to *A Choice of Kipling's Verse* (1941); rpt. in *T.S. Eliot: Selected Prose*, ed. John Haywood (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1953), p. 92.
9. In an essay which otherwise reaches conclusions similar to ours, Michael Long believes that in his early poems, Eliot is less egocentric: '(In *The Waste Land*) There is less magnanimity than in *Prufrock*, and less curiosity about life. The poem is haunted by a conviction that the truly perceptive mind has already "foresuffered all" . . . so that nothing remains but to record the vanities of small, urban lives which are all essentially similar. In *Prufrock* no two lives are the same. No two people suffered alike, so nobody could presume to have "foresuffered all" '. 'The Politics of English Modernism: Eliot, Pound, Joyce,' in Edward Timms and Peter Colier, eds., *Visions and Blueprints: Avant-garde Culture and Radical Politics in Early Twentieth-Century Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 106.
10. In a review article entitled 'What was T.S. Eliot?' (*Commentary*, March 1989), Robert Alter refers to several issues that have been discussed in our essay. Alter elaborates on Eliot's contempt for 'large categories of human beings, of democratic government itself,' as also on his misogyny and racism: 'What ultimately troubled Eliot was not just women or Jews but others in any conceivable form. His own sense of identity, his confidence in his ability to cope with the world, were so fragile that he repeatedly felt a potential of dark menace in the other, and in a good many of his poems he projected his own private terrors—"The horror!

The horror!" was the Conradian tag he first wanted to use as epigraph for *The Waste Land*—on to representatives of the other sex, or faith, or class, or ethnic group. This incapacity to open himself to others or to imagine them sympathetically, coordinated with a chronic uneasiness with life "here and now," links Eliot's sensibility with one prominent line of modernism.' Elsewhere in the article, Alter demystifies Eliot's borrowing and allusiveness and calls them strategies of concealment. Perhaps we should mention that Alter's article appeared after ours had been written and presented, in 1988.

11. For a discussion of the implications of canonizing him here in western terms and especially of teaching him in those terms in the classroom, see Jaidev, 'Self-reflexivity in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock:" An Essay in Ideology,' *Punjab Journal of English Studies*, (1989), 92-94.

The Confessional Poets

A.K. JHA

Both poetry and criticism ought to be wary of regarding a return to the self of the poet as the only strength of his work. Criticism can get too confessional to be useful. While confessional statements made in terms of the poet's exercises in his workshop may offer insights into conditions of creation, they may not have any direct relation to the reader's appreciation of his work. Modern criticism seldom approves of subjectivism even in the name of creation. Any expression of subjectivity for its own sake is viewed as an embarrassment. We find Robert Lowell, himself a major confessional poet, stating his reservations about overdoing personal poetry: 'I don't think that a personal history can go on forever, unless you're Walt Whitman and have a way with you. I feel I've done enough personal poetry.'[1] Charles Olson is rather critical of the dominant and vital assertions of one's self in its hopes and aspirations which characterized early American poetry.

> It is no accident that Pound and Williams both were involved variously in a movement which got called 'Objectivism.' But that word was then used in some sort of a necessary quarrel, I take it, with 'subjectivism.' . . . Objectivism is the getting rid of the lyrical interference of the individual as ego, of the 'subject' and his soul. . . . For a man is himself an object, whatever he may take to be his advantages . . . [and] the use of a man, by himself and thus by others, lies in how he conceives his relation to nature, that force to which he owes his somewhat small existence.[2]

Nowhere perhaps has the problem been faced better than in the poetry of T.S. Eliot. The voice of the poet can be heard or deciphered from amongst the rest in the personal manner of his expression. Yet it exists in the objective pattern of artistic expression which is a poem or a play. For example, one notices Eliot's use of the confessional voice towards the end of *The Family Reunion* in Agatha's speech.

> This way the pilgrimage
> Of expiation
> Round and round the circle
> Completing the charm
> So the knot be unknotted
> The crossed be uncrossed
> The crooked be made straight

And the curse be ended
By intercession
By pilgrimage
By those who depart
In several directions
For their own redemption
And that of the departed –
May they rest in peace.[3]

The confessional voice is used for an impersonal end and rises above the level of confession. In fact, Eliot's development from his poetry to his plays indicates how he learns to master the subjective states of feeling in order to make them serve an impersonal end.

The ideal of objective expression in Pound and Eliot gives rise to a tradition of well-written verse in American and English poetry. But gradually the ideal, requiring a capacity in the poet to handle thought and feeling together in their intricacies, proves too much for a number of poets who have only limited resources of experience and expression. The more conscious of these poets, such as Robert Lowell, try to draw on these to a definite purpose in expression. In *Notebook—1967-68*, Lowell turned to personal experience. This earned him the reputation of being the leader of the confessional poets, poets who used confession as a vital element of their poetry. However, personal experience as such is only one of the constituents of his poetry. He is too much of a pedagogue and academic and too much given to formalism and experiment in poetry. He does not permit confession to become the most dominant mode of his poetry.

Like that of some French Symbolist poets, Lowell's manner of expression tends to a kind of aesthetic finesse that is much too thin a variation upon the regressing subjecthood of those new romantics.

All night I've held your hand,
as if you had
a fourth time faced the kingdom of the mad –
its hackneyed speech, its homicidal eye –
and dragged me home alive. . . .[4]

One recalls Pound's rejection of a similar technique:

Invitation, mere invitation to perceptivity
Gradually led him to the isolation
Which these presents place
Under a more tolerant, perhaps, examination[5]

or

And his desire for survival,
Faint in the most strenuous moods,
Became an Olympian *apathein*
In the presence of selected perceptions.[6]

Pound's lesson holds no appeal for Lowell who likes to withdraw into 'the dark downward and vegetating kingdom/of the fish and reptile.'[7] The rhetorical finesse of his verse does not help him to discard a flaccid and overdone verbal medium.

> The old South Boston Aquarium stands
> in a Sahara of snow now. Its broken windows are boarded.
> The bronze weathervane cod has lost half its scales.
> The airy tanks are dry.[8]

The use of confessional manner by this Professor of Rhetoric is well within the guise of an objective network of relations. The subjective content of the poem at times bursts upon a variety of techniques.

> Once my nose crawled like a snail on the glass;
> my hand tingled
> to burst the bubbles
> drifting from the noses of the cowed, compliant fish.[9]

At another place, it is through the remembrance of experience private to the person but expressed objectively that the poem arrives at its conclusion.

> Now twelve years later, you turn your back,
> Sleepless, you hold
> your pillow to your hollows like a child;
> your old-fashioned tirade –
> loving, rapid, merciless –
> breaks like the Atlantic Ocean on my head.[10]

The lyrics that make the poem 'The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket' describe death by the sea. The lines here often rise to the level of the impersonal.

> For water, for the deep, where the high tide
> Mutters to its hurt self, mutters and ebbs.
> Waves wallow in their wash, go out and out,
> Leave only the death-rattle of the crabs,
> The beach increasing, its enormous snout . . . .[11]

The verse lines are suggestive of the *Quartets*, and the impersonal expression of the 'hurt self' speaks of a sophistication of technique. Sometimes, Lowell is able to recreate old archetypes in experience to a new purpose.

> Our Lady, too small for her canopy,
> Sits near the altar. There's no comeliness
> At all or charm in that expressionless
> Face with its heavy eyelids.[12]

Theodore Roethke is not a typical confessional poet. A poem like 'Cuttings' shows him to be a fine lyric poet. It reminds one of 'The Tree' by Pound. The immediacy with which Roethke can transmute the private into objective correspondences in speech gives his poetry a fine balance in which even the most subjective feelings ('Oh, when she was sad, she cast herself down into such a pure depth,/Even a father could not find her')[13] can be brought out and presented almost as part of a portrait: 'Scraping her cheek against straw;/ Stirring the clearest water.' The represented object often leads to a kind of aesthesis.

> If I could nudge you from this sleep,
> My maimed darling, my skittery pigeon.
> Over this damp grave I speak the words of my love:
> I, with no rights in this matter,
> Neither father nor lover.

This kind of aesthesis suggests the objective nature of represented experience in the expression of this talented lyric poet said to belong to the group of confessional poets.

It is only in an acute mood of self-scrutiny that Roethke turns to his own self as the proper stuff for expression. Thus, in his 'In a Dark Time,' he seems to be exploring his inner being. This exploration constitutes a phase in a quest that is reminiscent of the spiritual journey of St. John of the Cross. The senses are 'at odds with circumstance.' The 'day's on fire!' And he goes on to say, 'I know the purity of pure despair,/My shadow pinned against a sweating wall.'[14] The night journey usually occurs because the individual is in a state of despair; in the poem, the subject is already on the brink: 'That place among the rocks—is it a cave,/or winding path? The edge is what I have.' It becomes 'A night flowing with birds, a ragged moon. . . .' In fact, going out in quest is going out in darkness while for others it is still 'broad day.'

In Roethke even an uncommon subjective experience is transmuted to what is a tenable objective expression. Thus, the coming of 'The midnight' in broad day refers to the 'Death of the self in a long, tearless night.' But like the mystics, Roethke says that in such a state all 'natural shapes' blaze 'unnatural light.' The painful exploration through the dark night of the senses is yet the result of the individual's craving for light; it is the inevitable journey through the dreadful night. Roethke's expression of this struggling self is picturesque enough: 'My soul, like some heat-maddened summer fly,/keeps buzzing at the sill.' The trivial nature of the symbol from the insect kingdom, struggling onward, denotes the vital assertion of a human being acutely conscious of his triviality in the scheme of things. The triumph of the deeper self follows the struggle with the animal self. There occurs a palpable struggle between the two selves: 'Which I is *I*?/A fallen man, I climb out of my fear.' Awareness of the real becomes possible after the self acknowledges itself: 'The mind enters itself, God the mind. . . .' Such an apprehension of the real brings the self a measure of freedom in spite of its being placed in a sea of pluralities: 'And one is One, free in the tearing wind.' 'In a Dark Time' is a confessional poem born of a deeper feeling of humility than one finds in poems written by a 'beat' poet like Ginsberg.

Another poet who relies on the confessional manner in his poetry is W.D.

Snodgrass. His verse has a highly individualistic flair. The amused privacy of an ageing teacher becomes the subject of 'April Inventory.'

I taught myself to name my name,
To bark back, loosen love and crying;
To ease my woman so she came,
To ease an old man who was dying.
I have not learned how often I
Can win, can love, but choose to die.[15]

Here we find a degree of detachment in the use of confessional manner that is Frostian. However, whereas in Frost the feeling of the cogitating subject appears simply in a sort of indefinable plenitude of the poetic self, in the confessional poems of Snodgrass the feeling subject is also the sufferer of a divorce. The persona finds it to be part of a gratuitous experience which is difficult to forget or bypass even as he begins to recall how it had begun.

Before we drained out one another's force
With lies, self-denial, unspoken regret
And the sick eyes that blame; Before the divorce
And the treachery.[16]

If it is personal experience, i.e. his wife remembered after the divorce, that constitutes the content of 'Mementos,' 'What We Said' expresses the more general aspects of ruin and destruction after the War. The tone here accommodates general details so that the poem becomes something more than an individual's confession.

We talked of the last war, when
Houses, cathedral towns, shacks –
Whole continents went into wreckage.
What fools could do that again?[17]

Carrying confession to the common and general aspect of the age may yet lead to a feeling for order and the beginning of some meaningful phase.

Ruin on every side –
We would set our loves in order,
Surely, we told each other.
Surely. That's what we said.[18]

In an expression like this, the confessional and the formal help each other towards an objectification of the ruin that has been the point of reference for the subject and his beloved.

The confessional mode does not always succeed in the poetry of Anne Sexton. The uncertain, hesitant, confessing self does not go well with the broken verse lines of a modernist poet. In a poem like 'You, Doctor Martin' the confession ('I am queen of all my sins forgotten')[19] seems more a product of the poet's head than of her heart. As such, a certain superficiality in feeling is visible in the poem. 'Her Kind' is more successful because it combines confession with the poet's own beliefs as an artist. The private and the poetic meet, and the personal is made impersonal in the intense lyrical expression. The experience behind her feeling like a 'possessed witch' is essentially personal; it amounts to being haunted. Here, 'dreaming evil' leads naturally to this self-assessment: 'A woman like that is not a woman, quite. / I have been her kind.'[20] The objective equivalent of her imagined experience is haunting too.

> I have found the warm caves in the woods,
> filled them with skillets, carvings, shelves,
> closets, silks, innumerable goods. . . .

The equivalent draws on the occult as well, although, of course, in a refined and literary manner: 'fixed the suppers for the worms and the elves: / whining, rearranging the disaligned.' In a line like this, she comes close to the poets of the 'beat' generation.

Sexton is capable of using intense, concentrated experience to describe her essential function as a poet in terms of the suffered and the imagined.

> I have ridden in your cart, driver,
> waved my nude arms at villages going by,
> learning the last bright routes, survivor
> where your flames still bite my thigh
> and my ribs crack where your wheels wind.

This amounts almost to a vision and is the result of her definite understanding of what she is and the price she may have to pay for being what she is: 'A woman like that is misunderstood. / I have been her kind.'

Adrienne Rich can also transform the personal into the impersonal and this makes her use confession to a technical end in verse. For example, the lines given to Caroline Herschel in 'Planetarium' use confession as the ground for discovering order and meaning in one's experience.

> I am bombarded yet   I stand
> I have been standing all my life in the
> direct path of a battery of signals
> the most accurately transmitted most
> untranslatable language in the universe.[21]

Here, the confessing person, the self in microcosm, is yet related to the macrocosm and serves as a yardstick to measure the latter, as it were. The psychological value of what she is seeking is significant for this woman.

> I am an instrument in the shape
> of a woman trying to translate pulsations
> into images   for the relief of the body
> and the reconstruction of the mind.

In contrast, Rich's 'Living in Sin' apprehends a disorganized state of the senses by referring to the loss of order and harmony for the confessing self. A well-written poem, it, unlike 'Planetarium,' does not lead to a harmony out of what cannot be deciphered. Instead, it limits itself to a feeling of uneasiness in profane love. The equivocal character of its sensuous imagery admits of 'Half heresy.' Her wish for 'the panes relieved of grime,' partakes of latent guilt. The neutral and fanciful character of the imagery nevertheless objectifies sexual impulses.

> A plate of pears,
> a piano with a Persian shawl, a cat
> stalking the picturesque amusing mouse
> had risen at his urging.[22]

The treatment of profane love here can be compared to its treatment in *The Waste Land*. There is a slow and deliberate rotation of details to suggest the void in the speaker.

> that morning light
> so coldly would delineate the scraps
> of last night's cheese and three sepulchral bottles;
> that on the kitchen shelf among the saucers
> a pair of beetle-eyes would fix her own –

The description of the lover as a gratuitous partner further reinforces the feeling of alienation that pervades the poem.

> Meanwhile he, with a yawn,
> sounded a dozen notes upon the keyboard,
> declared it out of tune, shrugged at the mirror,
> rubbed at his beard, went out for cigarettes. . . .

This is bizarre but done from the outside, as it were. Accordingly, the confession achieves a certain amount of objectivity, as the feeling person describes the other in the objective context. Order is sought by the subject, the one, 'jeered by the minor demons,' at the surface by pulling back sheets, making the bed, finding a towel to dust the table-top, and letting the coffee pot boil over the stove. Under these desperate acts lurks her unnameable loss. In spite of the earlier treatment of a similar experience in Eliot, 'Living in Sin' does not appear derivative in its presentation of profane love. Expression in the poem is always equal to the extremely subtle private states of the subject.

The confessional mode in John Berryman co-exists with a highly figurative and intelligent use of speech made through a language of symbols. Like Lowell, Berryman seems to have learnt much from the best poetry of his time, especially from *Four Quartets*. He seems also to have developed an aesthetics of his own. Thus, in 'Conversation,' he writes: 'Traditional characters no more/Their learnéd simple parts rehearse.'[23] What would appear 'learnéd' at one time appears simple today. In Berryman, confession itself becomes the moment of recognition for the exceptional individual.

> We watched the embers cool; those embers brought
> To one man there the failing thought

of cities stripped of knowledge, men,
Our continent a wilderness again.

Unlike some other confessional poets, Berryman does not seek to create order out of chaos. For him, significant perceptions of disorder alternate with those of order. He does not impose a final conclusion on these perceptions; belief in a conclusion may be a deception.

These are conclusions of the night, we said;
And drank, and were not satisfied.
The fire died down, smoke in the air
Took the alarming postures of our fear:
The overhead horror, in the padded room
The man who cannot tell his name,
The guns and enemies that face
Into this delicate and dangerous place.

'Canto Amor' shows Berryman in a deeper mood of communion. There are shades both of Eliot ('Ash Wednesday') and Hopkins about the poem.

always for hér, in fear and joy for hér
whose gesture summons even when I grieve
me back and is my mage and minister.[24]

Feeling for and belief in the lady in question account for his relation to the Muses.

Muses, whose worship I may never leave
but for this pensive woman, now I dare,
teach me her praise! with her my praise receive.[25]

As in *Four Quartets*, facts of personal value are here transformed into grander matters. This becomes possible through a curious process of self-struggle and involves a journey from ill-health to health. His beliefs are sustained around a point of strength and assurance for his soul.

entombed in body trembling through the veil
arm upon arm, learning our ancient wound,
we see our one soul heal, recovering pale.

Here, we see a measure of self-discipline which amounts to a fine spiritual awareness. The poet's experience of the feminine archetype includes her past as well.

Whom sorry childhood had made sit quite still,
an orphan silence, unregarded sheen,
listening for any small soft note, not hopeful.

The transformation of an archetype into a living figure, with a past of her own, shows the relation of generic beliefs to personal experience in Berryman's poetry.

resistless flame, now in a sun more cold
great shells to whorl about each secret ear,
mysterious histories, strange shores, unfold.

A curious aesthesis is achieved in such objectifications of personal beliefs. The aesthesis brings a satisfaction similar to the one provided by music in which sounds communicate the vision. But this satisfaction too is a part of 'becoming.' The music that comes home to us in terms of the ecstasy of the senses is still limited to 'the flowing ceremony of trouble and light.' It is through love leading to marriage that a different relation of music is expressed: 'Marriage is the second music, and thereof / we hear what we can bear, faithful and mild.' This is meaning and harmony beyond the ecstasy of sensuous joy and it is perceived in marriage perhaps because marriage is part of a sacrament. The sensuous is not denied its due; rather, it is perceived as part of a grander pattern the belief system for which is provided by this anima figure. The symbol here is born out of an archetype, and personal experience communicates through the senses but also beyond them: 'Sing then beyond my song.'

Like Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath is uncertain of herself in her use of impersonal poetic techniques. She is at her best while expressing a personal experience in confessional terms. Her dependence on the personal gives an abnormal continuity to a poem like 'Daddy.' The easy fluctuation of rhythm that seems to characterize the poem does not deepen or strengthen feelings in a structural sense. The poem is merely the expression of an obsession, and its stanzas have a fragile pattern. Neither in expression nor in regulating details can it compare with a successful poem like 'Canto Amor.' This only proves the fact that the confessional poets do not share a convention.

At times, Allen Ginsberg, the famous 'beat' poet, also turns to the confessional mode. The longer verse lines in his poetry point to a different gain: poetry can express all that prose can. It is the curious state of *Humilitas* for the suffering self which is the central theme of 'Kaddish' written for Naomi Ginsberg.

> lamb, the soul, in us, alas, offering itself in sacrifice to change's fierce hunger—hair and teeth—and the roar of bonepain, skull bare, break rib, rot-skin, brain tricked Implacability.[26]

The technique Ginsberg employs on a grand scale is a mechanism of expression which may have its basis in the regressive state of the subject; but it is absorbent enough to draw on all kinds of experience, delicate, subtle, prosaic, trivial, opposing, and so on. In fact, the new manner presents a sensational contrast to the exalted and prophetic use of the self in the verse libre of, say, Whitman. Ginsberg is aware of the identical nature of their aspirations, even though his situation is so very different from Whitman's.

> What thoughts I have of you tonight, Walt Whitman, for I walked down the sidestreets under the trees with a headache self-conscious looking at the full moon.[27]

The full moon and thoughts of Walt Whitman may have something in common ith what the earlier poet had to say about the future. But the new poet 'with headache self-conscious' and in a state of 'hungry fatigue' is crucially fferent from Whitman. The new poet embodies the betrayal of Whitman's ›pe as well as of his prophecy. It is difficult for the new poet not to remember ose high hopes.

> Where are we going, Walt Whitman?. . .
> Will we walk all night through solitary streets? The trees add shade to shade, lights out in the houses, we'll both be lonely. Will we stroll dreaming of the lost America of love past blue automobiles in driveways, home to our silent cottage?[28]

is difficult for the subject to conceal the feeling of chagrin and bitterness hich has replaced the high hope of Whitman.

> Ah, dear father, graybeard, lonely old courage-teacher, what America did you have when Charon quit polling his ferry and you got out on a smoking bank and stood watching the boat disappear on the black waters of Lethe?

To conclude, it is not proper to group the poets together, because there is :le uniformity about the nature of their poetry. Sometimes a good poem is rn out of confession. On the other hand, interesting as it is, a poem like addy' resembles a case history and is unlikely to survive on its own as a piece durable literature. It is rather rare to find in the poetry of the so-called nfessional poets examples of the personal getting mastered to an objective, ›thetic end. These poets either favour a private expression or else fall back on a vocabulary that has already exhausted itself. They have written a few narkable poems, to be sure, but they cannot be credited with a substantial ›pus or durable literature.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Robert Lowell, 'An Interview,' in *Modern Poets on Modern Poetry*, ed., James Scully (London: Collins/Fontana, 1966), p. 249.
2. Charles Olson, 'Projective Verse,' in Ibid., pp. 280-81.
3. *The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969), p. 350.
4. Robert Lowell, 'Man and Wife,' rpt. in *Modern American and British Poets: 1920-1970*, ed. Louis Untermeyer (New York: David McKay, 1974), p. 120.
5. Ezra Pound, *Selected Poems*, ed. T.S. Eliot (London: Faber & Faber, 1959), p. 184.
6. Ibid., p. 185.
7. Lowell, 'For the Union Dead,' rpt. in *Modern American and British Poets*, p. 115.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p. 120.
11. Lowell, 'The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket,' rpt. in *The New Pocket Anthology of American Verse from Colonial Days to the Present*, ed. Oscar Williams (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 286.
12. Ibid., p. 287.

13. Theodore Roethke, 'Elegy for Jane,' rpt. in *Modern American and British Poets*, p. 79.
14. Roethke, 'In a Dark Time,' rpt. in Ibid., p. 80.
15. W.D. Snodgrass, 'April Inventory,' rpt. in Ibid., p. 161.
16. Snodgrass, 'Mementos, 1,' rpt. in Ibid., p. 163.
17. 'What We Said,' rpt. in Ibid., p. 164.
18. Ibid., p. 165.
19. Anne Sexton, 'You, Doctor Martin,' rpt. in Ibid., p. 187.
20. 'Her Kind,' rpt. in Ibid., p. 188.
21. Adrienne Rich, 'Planetarium,' rpt. in Ibid., p. 197.
22. 'Living in Sin,' rpt. in Ibid., p. 195.
23. John Berryman, 'Conversation,' rpt. in *New Pocket Anthology*, p. 73.
24. 'Canto Amor,' rpt. in Ibid., p. 74.
25. Ibid., p. 75.
26. Allen Ginsberg, except from 'Kaddish,' in *Modern American and British Poets*, pp. 167-68.
27. Ibid., p. 169.

Contributors

BIJOY H. BORUAH, IIAS (1986-1987); Assistant Professor of Philosophy, IIT, Kanpur.

SUZETTE HENKE, Professor of English, State University of New York at Binghamton, New York.

JAIDEV, Fellow, IIAS; Reader in English, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla.

A.K. JHA, Fellow, IIAS (1985-1987); Reader in English, Bihar University, Muzaffarpur.

OM P. JUNEJA, Fellow, IIAS; Reader in English, M.S. University, Baroda.

SUKRITA PAUL KUMAR, Fellow, IIAS (1987-1990), Reader in English, Delhi University, Delhi.

MALASHRI LAL, Reader in English, Delhi University, Delhi.

PABITRA KUMAR ROY, Fellow, IIAS (1987); Professor of Philosophy, University of North Bengal, Darjeeling.

PANKAJ K. SINGH, Assistant Professor of English, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla.