ISSN: 2231-5616

Sambalpur Studies in Literatures and Cultures

Series-II, 2012

SAMBALPUR STUDIES IN LITERATURES AND CULTURES

(SERIES-II, 2012)

Ed. ASHOK K MOHAPATRA

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
U.G.C. SPECIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (DRS-I)
SAMBALPUR UNIVERSITY,
ODISHA, INDIA

SAMBALPUR STUDIES IN LITERATURES AND CULTURES

(SERIES - II, 2012)

Editor

Ashok K Mohapatra,
Professor, Department of English,
Sambalpur University, Jyoti Vihar, Burla-768019,
Sambalpur, Odisha, INDIA
Email- mohaashok@gmail.com

SSLC, a peer-reviewed journal, is published annually by the Department of English, Sambalpur University, Odisha, as part of its Special Assistance Programme and funded by the U.G.C under DRS-I scheme. This journal contains full-length scholarly essays on the topics relating to mostly Postcolonial Studies and Translation Studies. However, it also invites essays and reviews on miscellaneous critical issues relating to environment, politics, language, culture and literary studies, subject to the following conditions.

1. Essays typed in double-space, from 3000 to 6000 words, can be submitted in both hard-copy format and text-file format by e-mail.
2. Reviews must be between 1000 and 1500 words.
3. Essays and reviews must be original and must not have been either accepted for publication or published anywhere else in any form.
4. Essays should conform to the 7th edition of *MLA* style manual.
5. Essays should be accompanied by the academic details and mailing address by the contributors separately to facilitate confidential peer-reading.
6. All correspondences and contributions should be addressed to the editor at his postal address or e-mail ID.

Individual Subscription- Rs 150/-
Institutional Subscription- Rs 250/-
Overseas Subscription- $ 10/-

CONTENTS

Editorial

This series of the journal, *Sambalpur Studies in Literatures and Cultures*, features essays on a variety of topics relating to postcolonial studies. It also contains two other essays: one on various aspects of nationalism, and the other dealing with the autobiographical nature of Eliot's *The Waste Land.*

Of the essays dealing with postcolonial studies, three by Nandana Dutta, Ashok K Mohapatra and Samrat Sengupta explore the ethical dimensions of postcolonial identity from epistemological and political perspectives, with reference to the shifting, indeterminate and marginal positions of 'travelers', 'outsiders' or 'dogs' and the problems of representations .

In her essay 'Travels and Encounters: Dialogism, Cultural Exchange and Identity in Postcolonial Texts' Dutta posits the Bakhtinian concept of 'outsideness' as a necessary premise for the epistemic gaze of the traveler. But the traveler in question is the postcolonial one, who, having had the prior knowledge of colonialism, understands how the colonial traveler used stereotypes to make sense of difference and systematically documented – as well as domesticated – the alien within a cognitive apparatus in binary evaluative terms. She reads the postcolonial travel texts , namely *The Jaguar Smile, From Heaven Lake* and *Dancing in Cambodia, At Large in Burma* that articulate their desire to identify with, to show likeness to, or to invoke empathy (not sympathy or compassion, both of which are emotional conditions working with an invisible line between self and other) with the other. The traveler tries to achieve inwardnes and an intimacy with people and place that is intriguingly ambivalent. Still marked by strangeness, it is also now desirous of affinity.

Ashok K. Mohapatra tries to foreground the ethical imperatives of remapping Anthropology into fiction, which Amitav Ghosh does in his *In an Antique Land.* What Ghosh emphasizes is that one ought to travel through human space and the cultural matrices of knowledge to understand the dynamics of its flow and exchange within contact zones of individuals and communities at various points of time in world history. What is also required is a vivid historical imagination to travel back and forth in time and imagine places as lived in the past by real people, or to see people and places with one's mind's eye when they are reported about in personal recollections, or referenced and indexed in impersonal archives of knowledge. After all travel, an imaginative navigation through times, climes and cultures, is the leitmotif in Ghosh's fiction.

In 'Dog-Story, Or How to Write a Parable of Postcoloniality', Sengupta discusses Satyajit Ray's short story "Ashomonjo Babur Kukur", Sadat Hasan Manto's short story 'The Dog of Tetwal' and Nabarun Bhattacharya's novel *Lubdhak* as postcolonial parables of dogs, the trope of the outsider, whom Agamben has theorized as *homo sacer* . He tries to demonstrate how dog, being an animal so close to man, represents the human anxiety of dwelling

in the periphery of human/animal divide, and that no easy representation of marginal identity in the form of dog can be done. He argues that an anxiety of unrepresentability continues to haunt the postcolonial politics of celebrating peripheral identities.

In fact the epistemological problem of unrepresentability stemmed from the famous phenomenological and ethical issue that Hegel raised as regards the slave beginning to protest the master's refusal to recognize him in the way he recognizes the latter in *Phenomenology of Mind/Spirit* (1807). Hegel acknowledges the slave's potential for revolution, which Fanon reaffirms in his *Black Skin, White Masks* (1956) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), among others.

For this reason, in his essay 'Frantz Fanon: Between Annihilatory and Restitutive Violence', Pramod K. Nayar, attributes humanism to Fanon's theorization of violence as a means of (re)discovery of the self – hence 'restitutive'. Therefore the emergence of the autonomous individual (free of structures like colonialism) is an anterior moment to the rise of the subject of Human Rights itself. Additionally, it is a new humanism in Fanon's utopian vision. Fanon's humanism, Nayar argues, is a result of both, colonialism and the anti-colonial struggle, and it is constituted between annihilatory and restitutive violence.

Three more essays under the rubric of postcolonial studies deal with the issue of woman. Jayeeta Bagchi focuses on the colonial modernity in 19th century Bengal and the cultural phenomenon of the emergence of the new woman in urban middleclass or *bhadralok* mileu. Constituted within the masculinist discourse of cultural liberalism that embodied much of the traditional values of Indian womanhood and armed with liberal education, the new woman wanted to seek independence and cultural agency in public culture, albeit with the help of the educated middleclass men. In her essay 'Creating the New Woman: Sukhalata and Others', Bagchi focuses on the life of Sukhalata Rao, daughter –in - law of Madhusudan Rao, the famous Odia poet. Sukhalata dedicated her life to the cause of education and social amelioration of woman, and this attempt of hers, like that of any other New Woman, was directed towards the proliferation of her own kind.

Aloka Patel, in the essay 'Nature, Woman and Madness in the Caribbean Island: Reading Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*', discusses how the novel deploys the self-representations of Antoinette as a riposte to the pathologization of the psycho-sexuality of Creole woman that took place in the 'new' colonists' discourse during the post-Emancipation period in the Caribbean islands. She also calls attention to the dialogue the novel engages with *Jane Eyre* in order to dismantle the trope of the mad woman in the attic and reveal its mysteriousness as a cultural construct of the patriarchal/imperialist discourse of the European man.

For his part, Muralidhar Sharma, studies Premchand's *Sevasadan* as an

interesting text illustrating the sanitization of the feminine pursuit of music as part of the nationalist agenda set by the colonial native intelligentsia. The upshot of this cultural movement was the marginalization of the communities of hereditary female musical performers.

From this series onwards the journal will have a 'special features' section comprising the transcript of distinguished lectures given either by Indian or western academics on topics relevant to postcolonial, cultural and translation studies, and book reviews.To begin with, we publish Saswat Das's lecture titled 'End of the Grand Text: Towards the Commonwealth of Texts'. He talks about "the implosive positionality" of postcolonial literature in India and its emphatic self negational retreat into the epistemic margins, if not into the permanent site of mis/non- recognition. Even as failing to pose a deliberative or dialogical encounter with the hegemonic postmodern formulations of the West, it has opened up the futural postcolonial space through a parallel study of texts like Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Das argues that it was the realization of the indispensability of text that united Achebe and Conrad in the colonial-postcolonial battle field for the text. Conrad, as part of the grand text, sought to perpetuate it even while exposing its failure. Achebe, on the other hand, proposed an African text to validate the existence of those subjects given up as ugly and redundant.

The 'special features' section in this series contains a review of Aravind Adiga's *Last Man in the Tower* by Ramshankar Nanda

Ashok K Mohapatra

■■

TRAVELS AND ENCOUNTERS: DIALOGISM, CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND IDENTITY IN THE POSTCOLONIAL TRAVEL TEXT

Nandana Dutta

> In the realm of culture, outsideness is a most powerful factor in understanding. It is only in the eyes of another culture that a foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly... A meaning only reveals its depths once it has encountered and come into contact with another foreign meaning: they engage in a kind of *dialogue*. (Bakhtin, 'Response to a question from *Novy Mir*', *Speech Genres*, 6).

> The image of the traveler depends not on power but on motion, on a willingness to go into different worlds, use different idioms, and understand a variety of disguises, masks, and rhetorics. Travelers must suspend the claim of customary routine in order to live in new rhythms and rituals. Most of all, and most unlike the potentate who must guard only one place and defend its frontiers, the traveler crosses over, traverses territory, and abandons fixed positions all the time. (Said, 'Identity, Authority and Freedom: The Potentate and the Traveler,' *Reflections on Exile*, 404).

Two elements of these statements are worth noting: one, the position of 'outsideness' which is a necessary premise for engaging in dialogue – an observer – position, determined by a host of preformulations; two, the traveler's habitual condition – that s/he "abandons fixed positions all the time", that s/he in fact 'passes by,' incapable of responding "over time." 'Outsideness', as Bakhtin declares in *Speech Genres*, is the kind of advantageous position that allows the viewer a mastery over the field or object in view. Such outsideness to a culture or a place has also been responsible for the multiple viewing processes of colonialism - the Western viewer noting things about the culture that required change or reform because he was viewing from a point of estrangement or alienation. If this is what outsideness entails, then the viewer from any one culture or another is necessarily caught in the compulsion to see strangeness and engage in an evaluative exercise that places this other culture within a scale of approbation.

This paper undertakes to throw together these ideas about viewership and outsideness with the postcolonial viewer who is aware of the colonizing gaze and its effects in her culture and carries this knowledge with her when she visits another culture and represents it. Here I choose to look at this viewer as she travels to lands with which she identifies in ways that the colonizer would not have and develops strategies of viewing that are sympathetic to the similarities between the two cultures. This new situation

of representation –and one can see the typology of travel texts produced by the traveler from an erstwhile colony visiting a country smaller in size than her own, less powerful geo- politically or economically and standing to it in the same kind of relationship that the colonizer might have stood to her own. In this typology it is also possible to think about what the visitor expects, what she actually sees or a combination of both. This might include not only sentiments of identity, superiority and feeling of being different and advantaged, but also consciousness of issues of political correctness and knowledge of colonial critique. This is useful to remember because the kind of person who travels and writes of experiences in this manner - the three writers selected for this paper are examples of this type – is usually the western educated individual, having access to the places of intellectual and cultural interaction and consciously critical of colonialism, and one who already has a repertoire of production that engages with issues of colonial critique. In this sense such a viewer's outsideness is interesting to examine because she already contains the way she will view the other in her own discursive understanding of both her own position and that of the other as much as in the relative positions of both countries.

This paper engages with two kinds of texts – the Bakhtinian text on dialogism and the postcolonial travel text of a particular kind, given the qualifications outlined above of an already existing repertoire where certain processes of representation have already been deployed - in order to examine whether this juxtaposition can offer a fresh look at the notion of dialogism and at the same time reconsider outsideness as a necessary position for viewing in the travel text. It works with the premise that it is only with the outside viewer that some aspects of a society are revealed. In India, the reform process began only because the necessity of reform was a function of exploratory and administrative travel undertaken by the outsider or by a viewpoint that had estranged itself as a result of a western education.

Using dialogism with its implications of outsideness to understand the postcolonial travel text would involve understanding not only the way encounters happen but the manner in which they are recorded within the traveler's written account of his journey. It would also point to the moral dimensions of the traveler's approach to the other in a situation that calls for an accommodation of the other within one's discourse - in the manner of 'writing about'- by the very compulsions of the genre. The question provoked at this point is *how does outsideness affect the representation of otherness*? The question is interesting especially in the light of dialogism's inherent reliance on a position of keeping two voices distinctive. The contiguity of the two ideas –outsideness and dialogism presumes that one voice does not subsume another. But if one looks at Bakhtin's example of the idea from Dostoevsky (Bakhtin 74) it becomes immediately apparent that

the fine distinction sought to be made over the separate existence of two voices is basically undercut by the containment of the other voice within the narrator's own.

In the three texts I have chosen for this paper, *The Jaguar Smile, From Heaven Lake* and *Dancing in Cambodia, At Large in Burma*, the initial position is obviously outsideness – a condition that is inevitable when a traveler embarks on a journey to another place. They also involve movement from a bigger, more powerful country to a smaller, weaker one. This is where the issue of what is understood by smaller and weaker might be worth examining. These characterizations obviously have echoes of colonial travel - the western traveler coming to one that he constructed as lesser than his own. But now it would also carry aspects of relative geopolitical position in the contemporary world, and with a different kind of traveler who has knowledge and awareness of that colonial experience, a somewhat gingerly constructed scale of strength or weakness on which countries of origin and arrival are placed. Here, therefore, the relative positions of viewer and viewed are worth pausing at. Rushdie sets out from London, and Seth from California. Ghosh does not actually mention a departure point. But in all three cases India is the imagined point of origin, and identification in the three travelogues happens because of this locational acknowledgment that marks the text. Further, given India's current position vis-à-vis these three countries visited by the travelers, the vantage point is not significantly different on the surface from that of the colonizers. Hence it is both easy and impossible to slip into the complacent superior viewer position – *easy* because of the realities of these positions and the beleaguered state of the countries visited; and *impossible* because of the political awareness of all these writers that is already indicated in the rhetoric that has marked their earlier texts and that functions as a kind of determinant for politically correct positions. So the question this paper asks is: how does dialogism as a morally valid mode of interaction work here to keep the two separate? In other words, how does it prevent subsuming of one under the other – the viewed within the consciousness of the viewer. Since it is assumed that these texts work to an extent by identification this is a point that needs to be examined.

Unlike in the colonial travel text, from which so much of the ideology and politics of travel emerges (for example the viewer seeing with a representational culture he carries in his baggage, using stereotypes to make sense of difference or and systematically documenting the alien and domesticating it within a cognitive apparatus that works clearly with a binary evaluative sense) and where the traveler/colonizer sustains and guards his sense of difference (of outsideness), in these three examples of what may be called the postcolonial travel text (largely because so much of the ethos of postcoloniality marks their production – period, location, philosophy, rhetoric and above all a shared sense of historical oppression),

the traveler tries to achieve an inwardness, an intimacy with people and place that is intriguingly ambivalent. Still marked by strangeness, it is also now desirous of affinity. These postcolonial travel texts in fact assert their desire to identify with, to show likeness to, or to invoke empathy (not sympathy or compassion, both of which emotional are conditions working with an invisible line between self and other) with the other. It is possible to see this in the travel writings of Pico Iyer, for example, where despite the difference established by the global citizen and the wide horizons he might access, there is an evident sinking of this distance in involvement with the minutiae of individual lives in the places he visits. In *The Lady and the Monk*, Iyer collapses the lines between subject and object, becoming as vulnerable as the object, craving attention and desiring intimacy. It is worthwhile to examine the idea of outsideness that proclaims both estrangement and the sustaining of distinctiveness in an interpretative situation alongside the corresponding Bakhtinian idea of dialogism that also sustains distinctiveness, a necessary aspect in the dialogue of one culture with another or of a viewer with the viewed. It is also interesting as to what happens to the traveler's sense of identification and estrangement.

The Jaguar Smile was the product of Salman Rushdie's visit to Nicaragua in 1986. He traveled from London to a country that was at the receiving end of the policies of a Western power, his moment of concern: "when the Reagan administration began its war against Nicaragua" (12). The operative issue here is his literal "outsideness" (implying of course many other levels of distance and differentiation) – actually in London, but imaginatively, the preferred point of departure, India (the politics evoked, very much that of the India of *Midnight's Children*).

Vikram Seth's *From Heaven Lake* is the result of a spell at Nanjing University, during which he traveled through China and Tibet – *his* point of departure being California, not India (though as the book develops it becomes apparent that the sympathy and interest of the ordinary Chinese in the celluloid India of Raj Kapoor is determining in ways that the Californian location is not).

Amitav Ghosh's *Dancing in Cambodia, At Large in Burma,* takes the author presumably from India to Cambodia and Burma, countries for which, culturally, historically and politically, India has been a point of connection.

Setting these three texts alongside the issues of dialogism and cultural encounters allows us to contend with exchange, dialogue, openness, as also passage, a person 'passing by', the traveler momentarily visiting, meeting another in the knowledge of transience, inhabiting only briefly, a moment and a place to be left behind. Above all, all of this set into the particular kind of travel text I have chosen for this paper - the postcolonial

travelogue – a nomenclature that I have taken here to indicate not so much of formal innovativeness as of the assumption of a certain historical baggage and absorption in the political/ideological issues of postcolonialism.

Unlike the classic travel text (of the exuberantly mendacious Mandevillan kind or the wide-eyed accounts of colonizers), where the traveler sets out into a realm of the different, the exotic, the blatantly opposite other, these three texts work on similarity, likeness – setting out to find someone, something, a people, a country which is like me or mine. The dialogic possibilities of these two types of texts must necessarily be different – the kind of exchange possible in the first situation likely to be different from that of the second one, - offering different configurations of the viewer and the viewed, the self and the other.

The two stages of journey – *the point of take-off* or *departure*, and, the condition of *passage* determine the nature of the exchange (whether or not there is dialogism and, of course, what do we really mean by dialogism are inevitable questions), and whether an absorption in one's own identity is too strong to shake off, and, for which reason, it stands in the way of a meaningful (real) dialogic encounter. It might sound as if I am taking for granted the meaning of dialogism here, and that I have indeed unquestioningly adopted the term and concept. This, I have found, is a very difficult problem to handle. This paper is as much a tussle with this concept as it is a study of the travel text.

The idea of a preformulated method of observation, a habit of 'looking' in the context of travel is advanced by Stephen Greenblatt in *Marvelous Possessions* when he speaks of "the nature of the representational practices that the Europeans carried with them to America and deployed when they tried to describe to their fellow countrymen what they saw and did" (7). Greenblatt goes on to speak about "the European practice of representation" while questioning this generalization of this proposition, in as much as he admits, "there were profound differences among the national cultures and religious faiths of the various European voyagers" (7), making it quite possible to distinguish between Franciscan and Dominican representations, and between Calvinist and Lutheran ones (for example, the English Protestant, Thomas Harriot, describing the carved posts of the Algonquins as resembling "the faces of Nonnes couered with theyr vayles"). All of this indicates the possible distinction amongst adherents of different religious persuasions, national classes, social cultures and professions in developing a point of view, a method of viewing, but also projects a particular categorization of 'otherness' – an 'other' now encountered, viewed and represented in terms of an 'other' already known.

The assumption of a way of looking and representing, carrying it with one as necessary intellectual baggage – this is the idea that I choose

to take out of Greenblatt's early colonial field of research into the postcolonial travel text. Since I am attempting to formulate what I would designate as a 'location', a 'point of departure', I will briefly touch on the premises of my paper which involve examining the intellectual baggage of a Rushdie, a Seth or a Ghosh in order to find out how such a baggage might facilitate or interfere with 'outsideness' and 'dialogism'.

The first premise is drawn from Eric Leed's three-tiered description of a journey – departure, passage and arrival. I have chosen to see departure as a function or aspect of location, extending it to point of view – preparation before the journey which may take the form of research done on a place or people prior to departure (of the kind mentioned by Seth); historical affinity or a more immediate political one (as with Rushdie), or a personal, familial link (related by Ghosh).

For example, embarking on the Tibetan leg of his journey, Seth expresses his concern at his lack of knowledge about Tibet. Such self-avowed lack itself becomes a kind of stance.

> My understanding of what I see will lack the counterpoint of expectation, of a previous comprehension, however fragmentary. I have always wanted to go to Tibet, yet I know that this is largely due to the glamour surrounding the unknown. About Tibetan religion I know very little; and I will have to learn about the climate and geography at first hand. I have no Tibetan friends. A picture of the Potala, Tibetan dancers seen in Darjeeling, an article or two in the newspapers about the Dalai Lama, chance remarks made since my childhood; it is of scraps such as these that my idea of Tibet is composed. (32)

Somewhat optimistically he then concludes, "the freshness of the vision may compensate for the ignorance of the viewer" (33).

Rushdie mentions two kinds of preparation, the political and the historical, one merging into the other, but each strongly determining:

> I grew daily more interested in its affairs, because, after all, I was myself the child of a successful revolt against a great power, my consciousness, the product of the triumph of the Indian revolution. It was perhaps also true that those of us who did not have our origins in the countries of the mighty West or North, had something in common... some knowledge of what weakness was like, some awareness of the view from underneath, and of how it felt to be there, on the bottom, looking up at the descending heel. I became a sponsor of the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign in London. I mention this to declare an interest; when I finally visited Nicaragua, in July 1986, I did not go as a wholly neutral observer. I was not a blank slate. (12)

It is possible to hear in this passage echoes of the favourite stances of postcolonialism – marginality, resistance, political solidarity - which are also the equally audible preconceptions of the traveler. And Rushdie's position is further complicated because he says, "I went to Nicaragua as the guest of the Sandinista Association of Cultural Workers" (12), the political sympathies taken for granted.

Amitav Ghosh traces his attraction to "stories... that my family carried out of Burma" (65).

> In my family, memories of Burma were kept alive by an old connection, and last December, on traveling to Rangoon, I found a trace of that connection in a small nondescript Durga temple in the commercial center of the city.... I had heard about the temple as a child from an aunt who had married into a wealthy Bengali family that had settled in Burma. (66)

He remembers his uncle, the Prince, and his nostalgic memories of the country he had been forced to leave:

> 'It was a golden land,' he would say, 'the richest country in Asia except for Japan. There are no people on earth to compare with the Burmese – so generous, so hospitable, so kind to strangers. No one goes hungry in Burma: you just have to ask and someone will feed you.' (67)

This image from the past, combined with a great deal of information about contemporary Burma, the rule of the generals, the resistance movements, the fate of Aung San Suu Kyi, his own meeting with Suu Kyi at Oxford, all of these serve to create an expectation of what he will encounter in the country, as well as determine his response to the Burmese rebels and to Suu Kyi.

Such preparation obviously involves the prior construction of the 'other' by the traveler, raising the questions: 'What is the dialogism of the cultural encounter'? and 'Does dialogism facilitate knowledge or obstruct it'? For the professional writer, the travel book becomes a renewed occasion to revisit themes explored in other places, in novels and essays. Therefore there comes up yet another question: 'Does such thematic preoccupation also function as a barrier to the ideal contact with the other'?

While addressing such issues, it is necessary to look at Bakhtin's own comments on the concept of dialogism. These are of course scattered throughout his works, and it is possible to evoke only some of them here. His most famous statements were made in the context of his critique of Dostoevsky. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* the following appears:

> In every voice he could hear two contending voices, in every expression a crack, and the readiness to go over immediately to another contradictory expression, in every gesture he detected confidence and lack of confidence simultaneously; he perceived the profound

ambiguity, even multiple ambiguity, of every phenomenon. (30)

Citing excerpts from what he calls "Raskolnikov's first great interior monologue" (at the beginning of *Crime and Punishment*), he says, "It's clear that Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov is the central figure in the business and no one else. . . . Raskolnikov actually recreates Dounia's words with her evaluating and persuading intonations, and over her intonations he layers his own – ironic, indignant, precautionary; that is, in these words two voices are sounding simultaneously" (74-75). Of Raskolnikov's comment: "But my mother. It's all Rodya, precious Rodya, her firstborn!" (qtd. 74), Bakhtin says, "one can already hear the mother's voice with her intonations of love and tenderness, and at the same time there is Raskolnikov's voice with its intonations of bitter irony, indignation (at the gesture of sacrifice), and sorrowful reciprocal love" (75). But what also echoes in this example is his affectionate, exasperated knowledge of his mother and, therefore, his expectation of just this response from her. As he says later on, "the consciousness of the solitary Raskolnikov becomes a field of battle for other's voices" (88). If this is an example of dialogism, it would mean that the other's language or statement does not have a substance separate from one's own comprehension of it. It is heard only in the light of one's own gaze at the other. And the impression that is created of simultaneity of voices is not even sustained in the following, which appears in "Discourse in the Novel":

> In the actual life of speech, every concrete act of understanding is active: *it assimilates the word to be understood into its own conceptual system* filled with specific objects and emotional expressions.... Thus an active understanding, one that assimilates the word under consideration into a *new conceptual system – that of the one striving to understand,* establishes a series of complex interrelationships, consonances and dissonances.... (*The Dialogic Imagination* 282) (emphases added).

And then, elaborating this, he says:

> Therefore his orientation toward the listener is an orientation toward a specific conceptual horizon, toward the specific world of the listener; it introduces totally new elements into his discourse. ...The speaker strives to get a reading on his own word, and on his own conceptual system that determines this word, within the alien conceptual system of the understanding receiver, he enters into dialogical relationships with certain aspects of this system. The speaker breaks through the alien conceptual horizon of the listener, constructs his own utterance on alien territory, against his, the listener's apperceptive background. (282)

The difficulty in absorbing this into the argument for dialogism is obvious. The first part of the statement seems to suggest (like the quote on outsideness and the comments by Said on the traveler) that the word

heard is absorbed into one's own system and only then comprehended; while the second part would suggest that the word is placed against the "alien conceptual horizon", read in a new context. Which one of these options is the dialogic one? The one that hears one's word, or the one that hears the other's word, or the one that hears each in terms of the other? The ambiguity here is between the impulse to listen and understand, and hear the other voice – which is dialogic, and the impulse – to assimilate the word into one's own conceptual horizon – which is monologic.

Caryl Emerson's critique involves a questioning of this very aspect of Bakhtin's claims about dialogism. She avers that dialogism "rarely has the patience to orient outwardly towards another person's words and acts over time" (139). Emerson cites two sharp positions in the evolving debate on Bakhtin. One is that of Bakhtin's younger contemporary Lydia Ginzburg who is caustic about Bakhtin's Dostoevsky fascination at the cost of Tolstoy, who, she feels, discovered the first principle of shared spiritual experience, which might be a better moral basis for the exchange with the other. The second example Emerson brings up is in the work of Natalia Alexandrovna Reed. Reed claims that there is never, in any of Raskolnikov's microdialogues, "a reciprocal act of communication... To communicate with others is *not*, she insists, merely to think about them, merely to carry on a mental conversation with them at one's own leisure and convenience" (141). "In short, Natalia Reed sees polyphony as a rapid, profound, and profoundly selfish *internalization of relationships* – a removal of human relations from the realm of responsible outer actions (or *interactions*), involving unpredictable, unmanageable others, into the safer realm of inner words and domesticated verbal images of the other" (141) This problem is evident in the glib use of the term 'other' now current, as also in the problem of real others and idealized or ideal others.

Perhaps Bakhtin's own sense of doubt about an easy understanding of dialogism is evident in this fragment from *Speech Genres*, which seeks to make a distinction between "Thought about the world and thought in the world. Thought striving to embrace itself and thought experiencing itself in the world (as part of it). An event in the world and participation in it" (162). In other words, looking at and looking with, both.

This complexity has a further dimension added to it with the following:

> Any object of knowledge (including man) can be perceived and cognized as a thing. *But a subject as such cannot be perceived and studied as a thing*, for as a subject it cannot, while remaining a subject, become voiceless, and, consequently, cognition of it can only be dialogic. (161)

Dialogic cognition thus assumes that the other is a subject because, without the voice of the other, heard in those complex ways delineated by Bakhtin, there can indeed be no dialogic encounter. We might here summarize the features of the dialogic encounter: outsideness, active

understanding, assimilating the word into one's own conceptual horizon, one's own utterance constructed against the apperceptive background of the listener, and above all, the perception of the other as subject.

These elements of a dialogic understanding become more easily apparent when read in the context of the encounter inscribed in the travel text where the process of interaction with an othe. i.e. dialogue is clear and overt. This allows for the testing of dialogism and the travel text in a reciprocal exercise. We may further specify this by placing dialogism in all its evident complexity against the two elements of the travel text that I have tried to show as operative in this paper. The preliminary preparation or preconception about the place to be visited determines both the mode and the thematic of the interaction. One may note, for example, the kind of themes of marginality that mark all of these texts and the individual author's absorption in themes that have already acquired a visibility in his creative work and the traveler's inevitable condition of 'passing by'. A combination of these two factors is evident immediately in *The Jaguar Smile*, a text that announces its politics from the very start. It records a journey that makes swift progression from Managua to Camoapa to Esteli; it is a trip crowded with people – politicians, priests, ex-revolutionaries, and almost all of them poets. Indeed, Nicaragua is presented as a country of poets, a wonderful image, but one that is determined by Rushdie's romanticization of its resistance. But it is the speed of the representation that is most striking, a rough and tumble of places and scenes, a jostling of people and ideas, all strung together by predictable comments of the 'small country crushed under the heel of a great power' type. When Luis Carrion, one of the nine-man National Directorate of the FSLN, says that "the real threat is the CIA", Rushdie writes:

> My reflex action to the Agency's entry into the conversation was simultaneously Eastern and Western. The Western voice inside me, the voice that was fed up with cloaks and daggers and conspiracy theories, muttered, 'not them again'. The Eastern voice, however, understood that the CIA really did exist, was powerful, and although it was easy to make it a scapegoat, it was also just bit too jaded, too cynical, to discount its power. (29)

Rushdie's comment is revealing of the preconception that so firmly occupies his mind and therefore responds quickly and immediately rather than taking the time to mull over it (I would refer here to Reed's critique of Bakhtinian dialogism mentioned above). The statement is swiftly incorporated into his own "conceptual horizon", the traveler seeing Nicaragua only through the filter of his expectations, determined by how closely it conforms to the picture he holds in his mind of a postcolonial country. This is the hybrid, marginal individual, inhabiting his favourite liminal space.

One may as well look at the following:

> It was impossible to spend even a day in Nicaragua without becoming aware of the huge and unrelenting pressure being exerted on the country by the giant standing on its northern frontier. It was a pressure that informed every minute of every day. (37)

In retrospect it would seem that the choice of country is intimately bound up with the matrix of preconceptions. The book appears to be as much about Rushdie as it is about Nicaragua, the condition of liminality, the hybrid self, projected and found in the other – the other no longer represented in terms of a known 'other', but in terms of the self. It is this projection/assertion of the self that is an interesting point to ponder. How is the dialogic process likely to work if the other is so neatly absorbed within one's own cognitive apparatus? How is one outside when at the time of being confronted with otherness the predominant sentiment in the encounter is of likeness or identity?

Seth's travelogue, a relaxed, almost languorous book, offers a slightly different case for examining these issues. The traveler is willing to go with the tide, occasionally acknowledging the presence of the huge state machinery that intervenes in the smallest aspects of people's lives, but generally unobtrusive – his persona is nonintrusive in the way that Rushdie's is not. By that token he seems less involved in the life of the country he visits. There is a sense of alienation from the people and the places he passes through...these figuring in his consciousness only 'in passing' and somehow failing to show any of the sympathies that closely bind both Rushdie and Ghosh to their subjects. Therefore when he writes about them he is interested but distanced. One is compelled to ask if this distance or refusal of overfamiliarity is a more ethically valid position for dialogue than the one where so much of the culture of a people and an individual is internalized and made one's own – where outsideness is in fact sought to be overcome by the traveler's identification through certain familiar postcolonial tropes with the culture visited. The somewhat different case that Seth offers here of the outsider who engages in representation that still maintains its distance from the objects of his gaze allows the voices of the people to retain their difference and distinction, and sounds as if they are in a separate realm from the observer. If one were to return to Bakhtin's example of Raskolnikov's containment of other voices within his own that undercuts their existence as separate voices, it might then become obvious that Bakhtin's presentation of dialogism as the ethical alternative to inclusion is indeed at odds with his position on outsideness, though his statements about the two concepts appear to suggest that they each contribute to the other.

The third text I use here is Amitav Ghosh's record of his travels in Cambodia and Burma. It reveals Ghosh's very different take on the issue

of dialogism. To illustrate this I choose the interview with Aung San Suu Kyi. A state of openness and admiration serves as a precondition for his meeting, and this sharpens his ability to discern certain things, to be interested in and to really hear the other. Beyond Suu Kyi's beauty and her international reputation, Ghosh sees

> [T]that she emanates *an almost mystical quality of solitude*, not solemnity; for she is always animated, either laughing or driving home a point with an upraised finger, but a *sovereign, inviolate aloneness*. (80)

This indicates a capacity to listen to and appreciate a person's silences, not to fill the silence with one's own speech or thought, a willingness to be rendered uncomfortable even by the quality of the person before one, without feeling the need to elide over it or explain it in one's own terms. While such an interpretation might appear to militate against the argument of my paper that preformulations and passage determine approach to a culture or a people, and one's identity comes in the way of that of the other, it is also to my purpose to prove that the dialogic approach is not an unproblematic one. And Ghosh's is another version of that state of mind that one carries into a culture and observes from. The attitude to and the representation of Suu Kyi is determined by multiple factors, and not least among these are the interest and expectation generated by the award of the Nobel Peace prize, the media focus on her, and the worldwide support for her nonviolent struggle against a violent regime. However, it is in the questions asked and the answers awaited as also in the sense of time spent in trying to understand, in waiting silently (the self withdrawn and not thrust out) that I believe dialogism finds its match. The preferred mode of interaction is the question, but a non-threatening, open one, though the difficulty of making a generalization even of this is evident in the way questions, no matter how open , are in fact formulated from one's own ground, from one's conceptual horizon, and this is true of both Rushdie and Ghosh. In the interview, as Ghosh asks Suu Kyi the political questions, a current of other questions also runs in his mind.

> As I listened to these answers, I knew what I really wanted to ask. I wanted to know what it was like to be separated from one's spouse and children, to be offered the option of leaving and turning it down. I thought of my own family, thousands of miles away, and the pain of even a brief separation, of the times I'd found myself looking at my watch and wondering whether my children were asleep or at play. (81)

While the mode is non-violative and the intrusive questions are not actually asked, there is difficulty not only in the interaction with the other but in the theorizing on dialogism itself is apparent. These unasked questions are framed in the mind from a prior knowledge of the conditions of Suu Kyi's life in Burma, although these are at the same time the results of a wish on Ghosh's part to connect as one human subject with another

human subject - a version of the other with whom one has *affinity* rather than *difference*. This might suggest a situation of self as other and the other as self – an interchangeability of self and other that is the only moral alternative available in interpersonal relationships, especially when these are under conditions of crisis. But empathy itself is a problematic condition as revealed in *the Jaguar Smile*, as also in Ghosh's text. If there is to be dialogue, how is difference, or the otherness of the other sustained? How in fact is outsideness achieved? There is no getting away from the commentary that intersperses the question/answer sessions. Representation inevitably entails inclusion of a person or place within the prior understanding carried by the traveler. That the travel book cannot after all escape the necessity of overt interpretation and fixing, beyond even the implicit interpretation of 'description' or questions is after all the very condition of its textuality.

Works Cited

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination.* Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Austin: University of Texas Press. 1981. Print.

_____, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays.* Ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Trans. Vern W. McGee. Austin: University of Texas Press. 1986. Print.

_____, 'Response to a Question from the *Novy Mir* Editorial Staff,' *Speech Genres* 1-9. Print.

_____, 'Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences', *Speech Genres* 159-172. Print.

Emerson, Caryl. *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin,* Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1997. Print.

Ghosh, Amitav. *Dancing in Cambodia, At Large inBurma.* Delhi: Ravi Dayal, 1998. Print.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1991. Print.

Leed, Eric J. *The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism,* New York: Basic Books, 1991. Print.

Rushdie, Salman. *The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey,* London: Picador, 1987. Print.

Said, Edward W. *Reflections on Exile and other Literary and Cultural Essays,* New Delhi: Penguin, 2001. Print.

Seth, Vikram. *From Heaven Lake: Travels through Sinkiang and Tibet* (1983), New Delhi, Penguin, 1990. Print.

AMITAV GHOSH'S *IN AN ANTIQUE LAND*: CARTOGRAPHY OF KNOWLEDGE AND FREEDOM

Ashok K Mohapatra

More than two decades ago in his famous essay 'Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought' (1980), Clifford Geertz made an observation that the nature of contemporary academic and epistemological terrain was fluid, plural, un-centered and ineradicably untidy. It was a richly variegated discursive field of texts that did not allow rigid disciplinary compartmentalization. As far as social sciences are concerned a shift of emphasis from ideal explanation to interpretation has become inevitable on the part of the social scientists. Geertz believed that analogies (which are predicated upon new protocols of interpretation) drawn from humanities had a new role to play in sociological understanding, so much so that social scientists were to look for uncanny connections between value laden concepts of swords and chrysanthemums rather than dwell on the mechanistic categories and principles instantiated by planets and pendulums.

This new figuration is necessary. Geertz argued elsewhere[1] that social sciences – and anthropology in particular – are interpretive only at the secondary and tertiary levels, but primarily fictitious at least in the sense that these deal with constructions of cultures lived by people in chaotic, irregular and inexplicit forms. Culture is neither a self-contained organic form with inherent forces and purposes of its own, nor a brute pattern of events and practices in identifiable locations. Social sciences would therefore imperil themselves to assume that culture is either ontological or subjective, or empiricist and objective. The end result of this would not only be the reduction of the complex materiality of culture by the positivist algorithm of ethno-science to a self-assured account or 'inscription' (in the sense Paul Ricoeur used the term as *text*), but also a conceptual manipulation of the fragmentary surface reality of 'other' cultures to present them as the attributes of an autogenous system of principles, or universal properties of mind. What Geertz advocated for is an interpretive ethno-science with an orientation so as "not to turn away from the existential dilemmas of life for some empyrean realm of de-emotionalized forms", but "to plunge into the midst of them" (30). Interpretive anthropology is not to answer our deepest questions, but to make available to us answers that others, guarding other sheep in other valleys, have given, "and thus to include them in the consultable record of what man has said"(30). The 'others' in question are, to my mind, writers of fiction who deal with human reality self-reflexively.

I choose to begin this essay with Geertz's critique of the positivist insularity of ethno-sciences to explain that much water has flown under

the bridge, and the theories and practices of social and ethno-sciences have become increasingly more self-reflexive over the years[2]. In this epistemic scenario Amitav Ghosh's trespass into fiction from across the border of anthropology can be construed as an interdisciplinary negotiation of the borders separating anthropology, travel and the novel. Such an interdisciplinary venture gains strong sanction in a larger politics of knowledge that is anti-hegemonic and liberating. In such politics of knowledge travel is factored in as the dynamics of negotiating the borders among peoples, cultural practices and knowledge-forms.

In this essay I shall focus on the ways in which Ghosh dismantles the anthropological knowledge regime, remaps anthropology into fiction and repositions the knowing self vis-à-vis the objects of knowledge. What he gestures towards is a non-coercive order of knowledge that was possible in the early Middle Ages in a space of cohesive social relations and representation of oneself and the other in harmonious relationship. This exploration, a liberating experience of intellect and imagination is, however, grounded in fieldworks that are fraught with mis-comprehensions getting complicated by linguistic incompetence and cultural prejudices, and assuming overtones of confrontation between the Hindu Indian anthropologist and the Egyptian Imam. And yet, the difficulties encountered during the fieldwork are pointers Ghosh uses towards a new model of anthropological knowledge production that is self-reflexive, new concepts of culture as well as knowledge as fictitious and fabricated, and the concept of the new anthropologist as a traveler who is engaged to explore not so much the human settlements in their cultural fixities as human migrations and trafficking in cultures in a space of cultural knowledge that constantly expands and unfolds.

Therefore, to come back to the topic of travel, James Clifford argues that travel raises questions of displacement to dismantle the hermeneutic authority of the resident ethnographer and the simplistic localizing construction of the 'native' as representative of un-contaminated, purist, authentic, exotic, monolithic cultures. This way the hierarchical relations of power implicit in the positioning of the ethnographer vis-à-vis the native informant is unsettled. Further, it militates against the organic, naturalist notions of culture and its rootedness in a specific place, and underscores the dynamics of its displacement, interference and interaction with other cultures. This has in fact been the main thrust of a revisionist paradigm shift that Clifford brings about from the Malinowskian field-work of 'residence' to 'travel' when he says:

> If we rethink culture and its science, anthropology, in terms of travel, then the organic, naturalizing bias of the term "culture" – seen as a rooted body that grows, lives, dies, and so on – is questioned. Constructed and disputed *historicities*, sites of displacement, interference, and interaction, come more sharply into view. (25)

Many significant points seem to emerge from Clifford's view. Firstly, culture is not permanently rooted in a fixed place where it is believed to take birth and die. Secondly, the people's movements, trafficking of/in cultures and acculturation account for the mutation and hybridity of cultures. Thirdly, the anthropologist ought to be herself/himself a traveler sauntering through different climes and cultures within a relativist epistémè rather than be a resident among the supposedly inferior others within an Orientalist dispensation. She/her must acknowledge that her or his preconceptions, systems of belief and knowledge, analytic principles and methods are not immune to interrogation by the other knowledge systems and beliefs. Fourthly, and most importantly, there is as much an element of 'literariness' in ethnography as is believed to be in historiography, according to Hayden White, which is inherent in the modes of emplotting, or types of configuration of events in terms of various categories of mythos, with corresponding tropes and ideological implications(1985: 70). Indeed, all the assumptions seem to suggest a new trajectory for the ethno-sciences to move from narrow positivism towards fictionality and rhetoricism. These, thus, facilitate the inroads of the novel into the realms of ethno-sciences and engage with their forms of knowledge.

It seems Amitav Ghosh deploys his novelistic imagination to redraw the ethno-cartography of culture with tropes of travel and disturbs the hierarchical relations of power within the knowledge-scape of the ethno-sciences. Given its nature as a genre perpetually in the making and its potential for a realism with possibilities for representing the "unrealized surplus of humaneness" that cannot otherwise be "incarnated into the flesh of *existing sociohistorical categories*" (emphasis added, Bakhtin 37), the novel as handled by Ghosh, the anthropologist-turned-into-novelist, becomes effective in exploring a new realm of the encounter of cultures and truths of culture-knowledge mediations under changing circumstances of power-relations during the pre and colonial periods in *In an Antique Land*(1992, to be designated *AL* hereafter).

In his essay 'March of the Novel through History: Testimony of My Grandfather's Bookcase', Amitav Ghosh argues that the novel employs a rhetoric of location and evokes a 'sense of place', the representation of which is paradoxically possible because of "the very loss of a lived sense of place" on the part of writer and the reader (303). Ingeniously low-key in tone, this statement is freighted with the profound idea that novelistic imagination presupposes that the novelist and reader both must eschew a narrow and benighted sense of rootedness in a place in order to imaginatively re-map a new space that is open, expansive and luminous. But this space is antithetical to what he has in mind: the regimented space that Foucault best theorized as one hemmed in by narrowly defined knowledge-boundaries of the positivist, taxonomic epistemology in the post-Linnaean period. In this space, which Foucault talked about,

knowledge is 'spatialized' into science and implicated in power structures ('Space, Knowledge, Power' 254). On the other hand, the space that Ghosh gestures towards offers possibilities of openness, diversity and freedom from self-enclosed disciplines. Ghosh imagines a cultural space that dismantles the antiquated centre-periphery, indigenous-exotic, self-other binaries that have pigeonholed ideas, values, beliefs, practices and world-views in fixed slots, notwithstanding the fact that culture has all along been free-flowing and unrestricted in its circulation across the globe in inter-subjective matrices. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Ghosh said in the advertisement of the course in Anthropology he taught at Columbia University:[3]

In the past, anthropology was based on the idea that you were a fly on the wall. But over the last ten or fifteen years, we have realized that the longer you are in a place, the more your presence there disrupts it, and, moreover what you see is dependent on who you are. This has led to experimentation with form. Nowadays, some anthropologists include poetry by the people they are studying and even their diaries. (43)

One is no longer considered by post-war ethnography to be a fly, a passive subject of someone else's knowledge, without self, volition, cognitive autonomy and agency of one's own; phenomenological truth is relativistic; the knowledge of a place is fragmented, and such knowledge is directly proportional to the duration of one's presence in that place or space; and above all the *you* is a self-reflexive trope of 'I'. Additionally, Ghosh himself used the poems of Michael Ondaatje, Agha Sahid Ali and Sam Selvadorai's novel *Funny Boy* for insights into the loss of chronology and dissolution of continuity that the terrorism of 9/11 had brought about[4].

What Ghosh emphasizes is that one ought to travel through human space and the cultural matrices of knowledge to understand the dynamics of its flow and exchange within contact zones of individuals and communities at various points of time in world history. What is also required is a vivid historical imagination to travel back and forth in time and imagine places as lived in the past by real people, or see people and places with one's mind's eye when they are reported about in personal recollections, or referenced and indexed in impersonal archives of knowledge. After all travel, an imaginative navigation through times, climes and cultures, is the leitmotif in Ghosh's fiction.

In *The Shadow Lines* (1988, to be designated *SL* hereafter), for instance, the nameless narrator, who has been pretty much rooted in Calcutta but well-traveled only in an imaginative world mediated by his mentor Tridib's memories of the narration of places and people, says about Ila "that her practical bustling London was no less invented than mine, neither more nor less true, only very far apart. It was not her fault that she could not understand, for...the inventions she lived in moved with her, so that, although she had lived in many places, she had not travelled at all

(*SL* 21). In other words, travelling is not about going places in the physical sense. It is all about the intellectual positionality to understand the relativism of cultures, take cognizance of the limits of epistemologies, and break free from the stranglehold of hegemonic representations of the other and to empathize with otherness.

Ghosh takes pains in his fiction to make the reader understand that the self that exists in itself is very unlike what it is made out to be in the knowledge systems and their varied truth claims. Ontological truths do not correlate with epistemological representations through maps and mirrors, since these make a travesty of truth and even at times generate a crisis of identity as portrayed by Somalian novelist Nuruddin Farah in his *Maps*[5]. This crisis is made so well manifested in novelistic imagination that Ghosh dismantles the regimented scientism of knowledge and the rigid time-space schemata of maps and mirrors in *In an Antique Land*. He argues in 'The March of the Novel' that the novel as a representation of experiences negotiates between parochialism and expansiveness, and dislocation is the very ground of the rhetoric of location it deploys. Though this genre is founded upon "a myth of parochiality" (294), it emerges from a location no doubt and has taken shape through dislocation. He goes on to add, "Consider the conceptions of location that made the novel possible came into being at exactly the time when the world was beginning to experience the greatest dislocation it has ever known" (294). In other words, the novel has the innate potential to play with both space and time frames. Also, because of its firm commitment to deal with the lives of individual men and women fiction in general and the novel in particular is a richly humanist compensation for the abstractions which anthropology indulges in[6]. That is why Amitav Ghosh dismantles disciplinary boundaries in fiction while pursuing the belief in a humane and expansive location.

In novels like *The Shadow Lines* or *The Hungry Tide* we find Ghosh pointing out to us the ethical limits of narrowly imagined epistemic spatialities. In *In an Antique Land* we find him not merely constructing a new spatiality of knowledge that is open-ended and non-fragmentary, but also conjuring up from the long forgotten early Middle Ages an equally open-ended cultural space of humane social relations, liberal adjustments with diversities, and accommodation for other systems of belief in one's personal world. He has been able to do so by underscoring the discursiveness of knowledge and reflexivity of self.

Ghosh straddles the domains of anthropological knowledge and its meta-knowledge or *constructedness* or fictionality. Indeed, as Brian Kiteley has mentioned, Ghosh told some of his students that he made two sets of notes during his anthropological research in Egypt. Of them one was relating to his doctoral dissertation, containing all data methodologically organized to structure and format academic knowledge; and the other

was a sort of self-reflexive account of how he came to interpret empirical observations and arrive at meaning. The latter note contained personal reflections which could not be incorporated in the former, the more legitimate document of knowledge. Nevertheless it helped Ghosh create, in Kiteley's words, an "intimate historiography"[7] of knowledge forming process that serves to disturb the institutionally sanctioned structures of knowledge, and challenges its authority. To prove the point Kiteley contrasts Ghosh's engagement with anthropological knowledge with Lord Cromer's, the British Governor of Egypt in early 20th century, and quotes him:

> The European is a close reasoner, his statements of facts are devoid of ambiguity; he is by nature skeptical and requires proof before he can accept the truth of any proposition…The mind of the Oriental, like his picturesque streets, is eminently wanting in symmetry…Although the ancient Arabs acquired in a somewhat high degree the science of dialectics, their descendants are singularly deficient in logical faculty… (qtd in Kiteley)

Lord Cromer's magisterial pronouncement on the mental inferiority of the Arab race is a statement of Orientalist knowledge, enounced from within the imperial power structure. The authoritative force latent in it comes from the vantage point of colonial power that Ghosh cannot not assume vis-à-vis his relations with the Egyptians. Although a D.Phil. scholar from Oxford doing fieldwork in the Egyptian villages of Nashawi and Lataifa during his fieldwork in the 1980s, Ghosh cannot be called an agent of the metropolitan centre of knowledge for the reason that he is a postcolonial and denizen of the Third World, like the Egyptian subjects of his study, and not someone superior to them. Variously known as 'Amitab' or 'docktór-al Hindi' among friends and acquaintances in Egyptian villages he shares the same social plane of familiarity and proximity to interact with the others in an intricate cross-cultural domain of meaning and knowledge.

What is still more interesting is that Ghosh's narratorial self is unstable, and it is a complex interplay of multiple author functions. Invoking Renato Rosaldo's theory of the "tripartite author functions" in ethnographic writings, namely (a) the individual who writes the work, (b) the textualized persona who narrates and (c) the textualized persona who functions as field investigator, Claire Chambers insightfully says:

"Ghosh's "I" narrator tends to slide between the textualized persona of the narrator, a thoughtful, perceptive scholar who muses on his experiences in the village and offsets them against his knowledge of Mediterranean history, and the textualized persona of the filed investigator, who is a comic character. The 'I" figure is highly multiplex: he is both academic – at once ethnographer, historian and linguist – and the *naïf*, a childlike being…(12).

As for "the individual who wrote the work", Chambers remarks that we know very little of his personal life when he wrote the novel, of his sexual and romantic life etc., his educational details and involvement in a Dhaka riot notwithstanding (12).

Being the author of a novel that fictionalizes anthropology and as a character in it, with shifts from one persona to another, Ghosh problematizes his own subjectivity as a textualized construction, narrative trope and discursive function[8] to suggest that he is no Cartesian thinking Ego, commanding the grids of infallible empirical reason to map space and knowledge. Nor is he like the Kantian transcendental self-sufficient Ego existing a *priori* and in-it-self. Ghosh is but a self who is liable to the perception and knowledge of the others, whom he seeks to study. Moreover, his status as a character in the novel and, therefore, a textualized construction, a narrative trope and a discursive function helps him break open the regimented space of anthropological knowledge and explore freedom within it as a traveler.

In her essay 'An 'Anthropological Reading of *In an Antique Land*', Roma Chatterji discusses the specific ways in which the novel problematizes the assumptions and principles of anthropological knowledge. She observes that

> Ghosh discards his identity as an anthropologist and becomes a traveler journeying across time and space to trace out features of these civilizational contacts. *In an Antique Land* reads like a travelogue in part, in part like a *quissa*... Neither of these literary genres conforms to the scale of conventional ethnographic writing that privileges the present. (100).

In consequence of his visits to Nashawy and Lataifa over and over again on scholarly missions he tries to piece together the lives and times of the Babylonian Jewish merchant Abraham Ben Yiju and his Indian slave Bomma of the early Middle Ages. He reconstructs the times of the Mediterranean and Indian Oceanic trade, researching as he does on the letters that a trader, Khalaf ibn Ishaq by name, wrote from Aden to Ben Yiju, bearing a reference to the slave MS. H. 6, or Bomma – so identified in course of his study of the pioneering works of S.D. Goitien on medieval Mediterranean society. Another cryptically worded and torn letter that Madmun, the chief of merchants in Aden, wrote to Ben Yiju also draws Ghosh's attention. He also follows the slave's trail to Damanhour in Egypt, Mangalore in India, and New York in the United States.

Ghosh's scholarly peregrinations through places and contact-zones among people are a spatial exercise in the contemporary that yields the knowledge of early Medieval past. This past had witnessed extensive travel of peoples, their dislocations and re-locations, unrestricted traffic in cultures through trade and commerce, and commingling of languages and cultures in new hybridized forms of pidgins and creoles in geographic

spaces relatively undivided by the boundaries of nation states, regimes of visa and passport, the protectionist barriers of trade and tariff of the present era (which is nonetheless, ironically, the era of globalization). Ghosh constructs the knowledge of an expansive space of travels and trans-culturations out of the Geniza documents, which suffered dislocations and scholarly appropriation through history as Masr fell to the Ottoman Empire and later to the European powers, following the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon in 1798.

In fact from late 17th century Egypt had stirred the scholarly and artistic imagination of Europeans like Sir Isaac Newton and Karl Leibniz, among others, and it had been "well on her way to becoming a victim of the Enlightenment's conceptions of knowledge and discovery" (*AL* 82).This eventually led to the publicity of the synagogue of Ben Ezra at Babylon in 1864 that contained a huge cache of Hebrew manuscripts, and subsequently its ransack by European scholars until it was completely empty by the end of First World War. Over the years the documents made their way to the libraries in Paris, Vienna, Frankfurt, London, Budapest, and the libraries of Cambridge and Oxford to become part of the Orientalist lore within the imperialist system of knowledge.

Ghosh's meta-fictional account of dislocation and re-location of Geniza documents in the imperialist European knowledge-economy is a radical move against the conventional anthropological epistemology. Anthropology takes an uncritical view of the data and their locations and temporalities. It does not assume that data or the objects of knowledge have a materialist dimension, and that they are spatio-temporal constructs of many dislocations in space and discontinuity in time. He also makes an illuminating commentary on the genesis of modernity that began with the rise of industrial capital, and the emergence of a new set of social relations that Henri Lefevre tries to understand using the three conceptual triads, namely, 'spatial practices', 'representations of space' and 'representational space'[9]. We may find Lefevre's theory helpful to understand how very different the social space of medieval times was from the modern counterparts.

Of many revealing observations that Ghosh makes about the production of social space in medieval Egypt, one pertains to the relationship between Ben Yiju and Bomma as master and slave. It was "a part of a very flexible set of hierarchies and it often followed a logic completely contrary to that which modern expectations suggest...In the medieval world, slavery was often used as a means of creating fictive ties of kinship between people who were otherwise unrelated"(*AL* 260). He also adds:

> But even the most mundane institutions have their life-giving myths, and against the setting of that distant backdrop of legend and metaphor, the elements of slavery that bound an apprentice to a master craftsman,

> an accountant to a merchant, would have appeared, *perhaps*, not as demeaning bonds, but rather as links that were *in small way* ennobling – human connections, pledges of commitment, in relationships that could just as well have been a matter of mere exchange of coinage. (*AL* 263; italics for emphasis)

Drawing on Lefevre's theoretical understanding that "the general relations of production which are simultaneously social and spatial" (Soja 78), we find Ghosh not only building up a homology of pre-capitalist economy and a social fabric of filiations, but also talking about the structure of cultural representations reproducing them. He hastens to add somewhat cautiously that these relationships were ennobling, not demeaning. So, the cultural space that Ghosh shows to us was essentially one of 'flexible' hierarchy – more accommodating than exclusionist and structured by principles of complementarities rather than those of domination. It had an element of nobility as well. But all this was lost with modernity, industrial capital, technology of warfare, colonization, Orientalization of the non-West etc concatenated in a trajectory towards ruthlessly impersonal systems of power and apparatuses of domination that, in Ghosh's words, can be describes as deficient in 'human connections'. One may as well add that commodification of knowledge was a new form of capital, a post-medieval development of capitalist formation and alien to the filiative ethos of master-slave relations in the Middle Ages.

While dwelling at length on the wonderfully cooperative social relation of master-slave, Ghosh also alerts us to the unsuitability of Western perspectives from which its cultural uniqueness can never be understood and appreciated. The modern western social science, which is the product of knowledge as capital, and whose gaze at objects of knowledge is a neo-Kantian and Cartesian legacy of Enlightenment, utterly fails to understand the relationship of Ben Yiju with Bomma. The relationship dubbed as slavery was "an instrument of religious imagination", Ghosh observes. He goes on to say:

> In south India, amongst the pietist and fiercely egalitarian Vachanakara saint poets of Bomma's own life time, for example, slavery was often used as an image to represent the devotee's quest for God; through the transforming power of metaphor the poets became their Lord's servants and lovers, androgynous in their longings; slaves searching for their masters with a passion that dissolved selfhood, wealth, caste and gender, indeed, *difference* itself. (*AL* 261)

The integration of spiritual, social and moral components of life and harmonious human relations in medieval India inflect master-slave relations in ways inconceivable to the Western tradition of political and moral philosophy[10]. But it must have been welcome to Ben Yiju, who was himself an ambassador of a richly eclectic Judeo- Islamic culture of North Africa that had been deeply influenced by radical Sufi philosophy. Vachanakaras and Sufis, Ghosh believes, would have understood each other's poetry

and culture which extolled devotion of the lover and servant as a spiritual virtue that alone guaranteed transcendence.

What is particularly interesting from the above account is that factors of distance in an overwhelmingly vast physical space could not prevent the men in early the Middle Ages to spread culture, establish human connections, share and merge each other's representational spaces. This is the reason why social space of those times had horizontal proclivities to reproduce itself with interesting local inflections. Long stretches of seafaring or journey on land, which merchants made or people seeking a better life undertook, underscored space as a phenomenon of the unfolding of new terrains, flora, fauna and human habitations to one's eye, and also extension of one's cultural space that needed to be re-mapped and re-represented in familiar terms. This is what Ghosh points out to us in his essay 'The Diaspora in Indian Culture' when he writes:

> As anthropologists and Ideologists have shown us, the symbolic spatial structure of India is infinitely reproducible. It can be encapsulated in a microcosm, as in Banaras, and it can be exported wholesale to be reproduced in other countries. It is for this reason, of course, that we have an Ayodhya in Thailand today. (248)

The Ayodhya reference is crucial from the present day perspective because it brought to the fore the contrast between the representational space of the ancient times of Oceanic trade with South East Asia that was expansive and reproducible on the one hand, and on the other hand the narrow, reductive and bigoted representational space of Ram Janmabhumi that denies reproducibility and insists on a chimerical Hindutva in its originary and insular form, not to be shared, exported, and reproduced through transculturation. *In an Antique Land* the narrator becomes autobiographical at a rare moment to talk about Hindu-Muslim riots in Calcutta and Dhaka and remarks:

> The stories of riots are always the same: tales that grow out of an explosive barriers of symbols – of cities going up in flames because of a cow found dead in a temple or a pig in a mosque; of people killed for wearing a lungi or a dhoti, depending on where they find themselves; of women disembowelled for wearing veils and vermilion, of men dismembered for the state of their foreskins. (*AL* 210)

In both scholarly discourse and the representational space of everyday life the identitarian symbols and phrases designating other peoples, faiths and cultures are almost always semantically reductive and confusing because the terms of such designation assume absolutism and fly in the face of cultural relativism and elements of incommensurability between systems of meaning and values. This is a disturbing truth that Ghosh confronts in his interaction with people in Lataifa and Nashawy while doing fieldworks. He is at a loss to find reasonably convincing answer to

questions put to him by Ustaz Mustafa, since the answers to the questions have been pre-empted by the terms of the questions themselves:

> 'Tell me are you Muslim?'
>
> 'No', I said, but he did not need an answer since everyone in the hamlet knew that already.
>
> 'So, then what are you?'
>
> 'I was born a Hindu', I said reluctantly, for if I had a religious identity at all it was largely by default.
>
> There was long silence during which I tried hard to think of an arresting opening line that would lead the conversation towards some bucolic, agricultural subject. But the moment passed, and in a troubled voice Ustaz Mustafa said: 'What is this "Hinduki" thing? I have heard of it before and I don't understand it. If it is not Christianity nor Judaism nor Islam what can it be? Who are its prophets?'
>
> 'It's not like that', I said. 'There aren't any prophets.'
>
> 'So you are like the Magi?'...
>
> I shook my head vaguely, but before I could answer, he tapped my arm with his forefinger. 'No', he said smiling coquettishly. 'I know – it's cows you worship – isn't that so?'(*AL* 47)

So goes the quizzing of Ghosh by the Egyptian, a knowledgeable and supposedly progressive-mined man, bogged by his received notions and formulaic questions, and Ghosh being equally confused by his own stock responses, until suddenly the exchanges turn dark and menacing with the Mustafa's question: 'Tell me something, tell me, are you a communist?', hearkening us back to the neurotic binaries of the West versus the Soviet bloc in the days of the cold war.

This episode, like many of its kind, is to my mind a parable of mutual mis-comprehension of people linguistically and culturally different, for it alerts us to the disturbing truth that travel writers and translators subject to "domestication" the culture and language they study and this way shape the perspective of one culture upon another (Bassnett 2011: 22). This is what happens during colonization. But postcoloniality is just the reverse, in that it is all about foregrounding the admittance of the barriers of language and relativism of culturally constructed beliefs, and notions of truth as well as propriety. The filed-working persona of Ghosh seems to participate in the postcolonial fable, as it were, when he faces the limits of his own competence in Arabic and admits to "being trapped language" of mis-communication.

In the village of Latafia, when out of great concern Jabir asks him if he has been circumcised or whether men undergo circumcision from the land he has come from, he says somewhat hesitatingly:

'Some people do,' I said. 'And some people don't'.

'You mean', he said in rising disbelief, there are people in your country who are not circumcised?'

In Arabic the word 'circumcise' derives from a root that mean 'to purify'. I had no alternative; I was trapped by language.

'But not you…' He could not bring himself to finish the sentence.

'Yes', I said. My face was hot with embarrassment and my throat had gone dry: 'Yes, me too.' (*AL* 62)

The parable challenges some of our uncritical suppositions about the epistemological authority of the traveler-narrator and the truth claims of the travel narrative, which are, to quote Bassnett: "We collude with the idea that travelers can talk to anyone, anywhere in the world and record their conversations in the form of direct speech" (1998: 36) . It

In the novel Ghosh faces again and again the barriers of being a non-Muslim, an infidel, an outsider and someone from a strange, primitive land where cows are worshipped and the dead are burned. Things get really worse and exchanges become acrimonious when the terms of cultural differences deployed against Ghosh by Imam Abu Ibrahim begin to be determined by his valorization of the technologically advanced and culturally superior Europe: 'How will your country ever progress if you carry on doing these things? You've even been to Europe; you have seen how advanced they are. Now tell me, have you ever seen them burning their dead?'(*AL* 235). As Ghosh does not know how to defend his culture in its own terms and earn the Imam's appreciation for it, he tries to get even with him by boasting that India is far ahead of Egypt in the modern technology of warfare. But the Imam refutes this claim when he boasts that Egyptians have better bombs and guns. However, Ghosh is self-critical enough to reflect, "the Imam and I: delegates from two superseded civilizations, vying with each other to establish a prior claim to the technology of modern violence" (*AL* 236). This scene is perhaps the most painful moment for the narrator to acknowledge that absence of a wonderful inter-cultural space of between two ancient civilizations that had been built through trade and travel is now non-existent. Worse still, the emotional and kinship ties that Ben Yiju built with Bomma, or married Ashu, a girl from the Nair community of Mangalore region, can never be the possibilities of transculturation anymore; nor can these cultural formations be mapped by anthropology with any degree of success. The rigidly defined boundary lines of knowledge disable a nuanced perspective on relatively unfamiliar experiences and events. Already imbricated with imperialist power structure, the western ethnography and historiography deny uniqueness to the culture or history under study, reducing their richness and complexity in terms of already existing, dominant epistemic schemes.

A case in point is the Bhuta cult in the Malabar region of south India in the early middle ages. Ghosh makes an observation that there were Bhuta shrines all around the region, and the Magavira fishing community of the Malabar Coast, which was not a part of the Hindu society, worshipped the deity Bobbariya-bhuta, believed to be the spirit of a Muslim mariner. However, folklorists and anthropologists since the sixteenth century have given a wrong account of this community and its faith. He writes that he searched for materials to have an understanding of Magavira religious practices and observed the following thus:

> But when I began to look for material I discovered that as far as most of the standard authorities were concerned the Bhuta-cult did not count as 'religion' at all, it fell far beneath the Himalayan gaze of canonical Hindu practice. Such detailed studies as there were, I found, were mainly carried out by anthropologists and folklorists; it was often dismissed as mere 'devil worship' and superstition. (*AL* 264)

This is a powerful critique by Ghosh of a knowledge system that was Hindu-centric in its bias and also Orientalist in intent and effect. It has perpetuated the centre-periphery, canonical-non canonical distinctions and has in a way prepared the ground, in conjunction with popular culture, for erasure of the name 'Bomma' from cultural memory. The old woman whom Ghosh met in Managalore "was taken by surprise" when asked she had ever encountered the name Bomma amongst people of the Magavira caste:

> No, she said, shaking her head vigorously, you would never hear a name like that in the village nowadays; all the boys here had names like Ramesh and Vivek now, proper names, like you heard on the radio and TV. (*AL* 272)

Ghosh also observes during his visit to Bhuta shrines in Mangalore that these too have been appropriated by mainstream Hindu religion. In one of the shrines, the Bobbariya- bhuta was found in a totally altered guise, standing beside Vishnu at a lower level, and represented as a Hindu god (*AL*274).

In an Antique Land shows us that in keeping with the processes of cultural appropriation of non-dominant beliefs, values, practices and representation by the dominant ones that go on in history, knowledge systems are structured in a skewed way within the stranglehold of institutions of power that can be academic and political. Accordingly, discourses and regimes of truth values are built, reproduced and sustained.

Ghosh did operate within academia for some time, but broke free from academic scholarship and took to fiction writing, attesting to its rhetoric of evoking an alternative and a qualitatively better location of/ for human beings as much as locating fiction in a new knowledge space.

The knowledge space is re-mapped, as Amitav Ghosh shows, through imaginary travels that one undertakes with a sense of wonder and a mode of perception that is more intuitive to see uncanny links between events across geometric space and chronological time, and create new spatiality of multiple time frames. In point of fact he does so finding striking resemblance between a story he heard from Sidi Abu-Kanka shrine from Zaghloul in Nashawy and legends about the Bhuta-shrine in Mangalore from a priest. The stories and legends describing identical patterns of event in a calculated manner to emphasize the miraculous power of the saint and the god in question also point towards larger patterns of people's credence to non-canonical faiths. The geo-political barriers, localized protocols of dominant truth and institutionally controlled knowledge borders notwithstanding, one should travel and map a new terrain in one's imagination.

One need not be a scholar-novelist like Ghosh to venture out for new spatiality, or be jet-lagged and perpetually drifting from one transit lounge to another. What one needs more than anything else is the passion for the "wonders of the unknown" (*AL* 174), which Ghosh found in Zaghloul or in the anonymous narrator of *The Shadow Lines*. With such passion one can traverse vast space like "the traveler from the antique land" as in Shelley's 'Ozymandias' and point out to us the colossal ruin and waste vanity can lead us to. In that knowledge perhaps lies our freedom.

Notes

1. See Geertz's 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture' (1973)', in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essay*, 3-30.
2. The self-reflexivity began perhaps from Jay Ruby's *A Crack in Mirror: Reflexive Perspectives in Anthropology* (1982). Thereafter the anthropological narratives have assumed textualist and translational orientations, vindicated subsequently by the influential works of Talal Asad(1986), Mary Louis Pratt (1986) and James Clifford(1997). In addition, a literary bias that was already implicit in the work of Clifford has also been articulated more amply by Trencher, Friedman, Restrepo and Escobar (Chambers 2-3).
3. See *New York* magazine (August 7, 1995).
4. In his essay 'The Greatest Sorrow: Times of Joy Recalled in Wretchedness', Ghosh interpreted the 9/11 bombing of the twin towers of World Trade Centre as an "epistemic violence" consisting in the loss of the protocols and principles in terms of which one comprehends the world in the present and envisages the future. He wrote, " Not the least of the terror of a moment such as that of September 11 is that it reveals the future to be truly what it is: unknown, unpredictable, and utterly inscrutable. It is this epistemic upheaval that Michael Ondaatje and Agha Shahid Ali point to when they mourn the maps of our longings and our forty-day daydreams: the pure intuition of

poetry had led them to an awareness of this loss long before the world awakened to the knowledge that "nothing will be the same again"(98).

5. In *Maps*, Askar, the narrator-protagonist deals with the problem of identity in all its dimensions – personal, familial, ethnic and national, using imagery of maps and mirrors that keep clashing throughout the narrative. How indeed a Somali orphan like him reared by an Ethiopian woman, Misra, in Ogaden, a Somalian town under the control of Ethiopia, is to map his psychic space? The official map of Somalia is as much a misrepresentation of space as the official information with the Somalian police that Misra is the helper of Ethiopian soldiers is a misrepresentation of self. What is true and what is untrue remains a riddle, and Farah refuses to offer any answer to that.

6. In an interview with Frederick Luis Aldama, Ghosh stated that his writings, whether it is fiction or non-fiction – which are artificially compartmentalized and institutionally controlled – ultimately address the lives of the individuals and added, "At one point in my life I was doing anthropology. But I realized very early on that anthropology was not of interest to me in the end because it was about abstractions, the way you make people into abstractions and make them into, as it were, statistical irregularities. And in the end my real interest is in the predicament of individuals. And in this I don't think there is that much difference between fiction and non-fiction" (86-87).

7. See Brian Kiteley's 'Trapped by Language:On Amitav Ghosh's *In an Antique Land*'. www.du.edu/~bkiteley/ghoshtalk.html. He writes: Amitav Ghosh said he learned to write fiction by means of the process of keeping two notebooks of observations during his fieldwork in Egypt. He spoke to a class of mine a few years ago and answered some question about the value of writing programs, saying that his anthropological field work was all the training in creative writing that he ever had. One set of notes were for the official work he was doing, the doctoral thesis research; the other was personal, commentary on the struggles to make sense of things, but also overflowing with the material unsuited for the anthropology he was doing. Ghosh said that the tension between these two notebooks made him realize some important lesson about writing generally. I think it is fair to say that *In an Antique Land* is in some ways simply a record of that learning process for Ghosh, among other things. You notice, as you read it, both the highly personal search into history he is doing—intimate historiography, in a sense—which also contains very sophisticated critiques of Western historiography. At the same time Ghosh reveals his findings about the relatively unimportant (or a-historical) Hindu slave, he also revels in the casual demolition of the process of making history his search for Bomma yields. There is a link between these two processes: the learning of one trade (writing fiction) while practicing another; and the subversive search for an anonymous unremarkable historical figure. The link is that Ghosh's writing yields subsidiary pleasures. By breaking down barriers between genres, Ghosh is not simply attacking the boundaries, or trying to destroy the power

structures inherent in genre boundaries. He is seeking a more honest and accurate way of telling. Books ought to create their own structure out of the material they are made of.

8. Foucault, among others, questions the transcendental and pre-given ontology of the author in the much acclaimed essay 'What Is an Author?' The title of the essay beginning with "What" rather than "Who" anticipates the thrust of his argument that the author as a rational being, made fully individualized and psychologized, endowed with motive, creative power etc is realized within 'author function' in privileged discourse like literature. See *The Foucault Reader*, Ed. Paul Rabinow 101-120.

9. Henri Lefevre uses the triad, namely 'spatial practice', 'representations of space' and 'representational space', in keeping with the Marxist interpretation of social relations and cultural practices in terms of relations of production. He says that 'spatial practice embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and social formations. Spatial practice ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion. In terms of social space, and of each member of a given society's relationship to that space, this cohesion implies a guaranteed level of competence and a specific level of performance. As for 'representations of space', these are tied to the relations of production and to the 'order' which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to 'frontal' relations. For their part, 'representational spaces' are those that embody complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art (which may come eventually to be defined less as a code of space than as a code of representational spaces). See Lefevre's The *Production of Space* (33).

10. Whether it is Aristotle, or Hegel, or Nietzsche, the western philosopher discusses the conflictual nature of master-slave relation in a distinctly secular or anti-Christian/anti-religious context of ethics. Aristotle and Nietzsche favour the rule of the master over the slave. In his *Politics*, Aristotle focuses on the political and pragmatic necessity of the domination of the master over a natural slave, while Nietzsche in *The Genealogy of Morality* interprets the master morality as nobility that creates values for itself and controls the slave morality, which is largely derivative and inferior. However, in his *Phenomenology of Mind*, Hegel argues that it is the bourgeois master, who depends on the slave worker formally and materially for his consciousness and illusory freedom, and the worker slave, because of the transforming power of labor, has the potential for socio-historical changes through violence. The ethical imperatives of either sustaining the existing structures of political power or bringing about historical progress towards shift of power from one class to another rule out possibilities of non-coercive and complementary – not conflictual and dialectical – the master-slave relationship that Ghosh explores.

Works Cited

Bakhtin, M.M.. 'Epic and Novel'. *The Dialogic Imagination.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983. 3-40. Print.

Bassnett, Susan. 'When Translation is not a Translation'. *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation.*Ed. Susan Bassnett and Andre Lefevre. Cleveland: Multilingual Matters, 1998. 25-39. Print.

_____. 'Culture and Translation'. *A Companion to Translation Studies.* Eds. Pitor Kuhiwczak and Karin Littau. New Delhi: Orient Black Swan, 2011. 13-23. Print.

Chambers, Claire. Anthropology and Cultural Translation: Amitav Ghosh's *In an Antique Land*. *Postcolonial Text.* Vol. 2.3(2006): 1-19. Web.

Chatterji, Roma. 'An Anthropological Reading of *In an Antique Land*'. *Amitav Ghosh: Critical Perspectives.* Ed. Brinda Bose. Delhi: Pencraft International, 2003. 91-102. Print.

Clifford, James. *Routes: Travels and Translation in the late Twentieth Century.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1997.Print.

Farah, Nuruddin. 1986. *Maps.* London: Penguin Books, 2000.Print.

Foucault, Michel. 'Space, Knowledge, Power'. *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought.* Ed. Paul Ribanow. London: Penguin Books, 1991. 239-56. Print.

_____. 'What is an Author?' *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought.* Ed. Paul Ribanow. London: Penguin Books, 1991. 101-120.Print.

Geertz, Clifford . 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture'. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays.* New-York: Basic Books, 1973. 3-30. Print.

_____. 'Blurred Genres: the Refiguration of Social Thought. *The American Scholar*, vol. 49 . 2 (1980):165-179.Print.

Ghosh, Amitav. 1988. *The Shadow Lines.* New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1995.Print.

_____. *In an Antique Land.* New Delhi: Ravi Dayal, 1992.Print.

_____. 'March of the Novel through History: Testimony of my Grandfather's Bookcase'. *The Imam and the Indian.* New Delhi: Ravi Dayal Publisher, 2002. 287-304.Print.

_____. 'The Diaspora in Indian Culture'. *The Imam and the Indian.* New Delhi: Ravi Dayal Publisher, 2002. 243-250. Print.

_____. Interview with Frederick Luis Aldama. *Wold Literature Today.* Vol.76.2 (Spring 2002): 84-90. Web.

_____. 'The Greatest Sorrow: Times of Joy Recalled in Wretchedness'. *The Kenyon Review.* New Series. Vol25:3/4(Summer-Autumn 2003). 86-99. Web.

Lefevre, Henri. *The Production of Space.* Trans. Donald Nicholson- Smith Oxford: Blackwell, 1991. Print.

Pratt, Mary Lousie. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation.* London: Routledge, 1992. Print.

Robertson, Jennifer. 'Reflexivity Redux: A Pithy Polemic on "Positionality"'. *Anthropological Quarterly.* Vol.75.4(2002): 785- 792. Print.

Soja, Edward W. *Postmodernist Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory.* London: Verso, 1989. Print.

White, Hayden. 1978. *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University P, 1985. Print.

■■

DOG-STORY, OR HOW TO WRITE A PARABLE OF POSTCOLONIALITY

Samrat Sengupta

> A big dog stands on the highway. He walks on confidently and is run over by a car. His peaceful expression shows that he is usually better looked after—a domestic animal to whom no harm is done. But do the sons of the rich bourgeois families who also suffer no harm have the same peaceful expression? They were cared for just as lovingly as the dog which is now run over. (Adorno and Horkheimer, 218)

In the world of humanity the word dog occurs in two sense – one is the loving creature who stays so close to man, accompanies him, shares life with him and another is the abominable creature signifying crude animality, aggressivity, and who can simply be killed and be given a dog's death. Dog in the latter sense is often used as an abuse hurled against human beings often signifying animality and lack of proper parentage (as in case of the bad word 'son of a bitch' for example). Parentage is something which is the marker of human identity – the very mode of constitution of his being and also his movement from animality to humanity. Parentage is also something which gets overdetermined as logic of social formation of identities and replicates itself anew in forms of kinship ties, community bonding, nationhood, religion and race. A dog doesn't have all these. So calling someone a dog might signify unsociability and lack of proper identity.

To celebrate one's marginal position in a society one can choose to adopt doghood, calling himself an underdog (or a *slum dog* as the title of the Oscar winning film made on the life of a Mumbai slum dweller suggests). In this way, accepting the thrust-upon marginal name that means animality, can one then think of promoting a resistance to the enlightenment myths of *Homo sapiens universalis*, for whom truth is disclosable or unhidden as opposed to animal for which truth about their existence remains permanently hidden? Can animality be given the charge of playing carnival in the official rhetoric of enlightenment rationality that claims to clean all animality from within? Or if the carnival itself is helpful for the production of the normal – the stable human subject subjected to power? Can carnival itself be used and appropriated by power?

We need to remember that the constructions of both "human" and "animal" are relational and reciprocal categories. Even what is animal cannot be determined by man as a thing-in-itself except its status in human chain of meaning-making apparatus. Therefore the animal performances and sacrifices in human culture in various forms are not outside the structures of power. They are always within the conceptual category of

the "human"; being reciprocal to the "animal" always already bears its traces. However, one wonders if the postcolonial imbibing of a certain carnivalesque spirit through celebration of marginal identities represented by animality actually destabilizes the power structure from within. Here the choice of dog seems effective to understand human/animal binary in terms of centre/periphery, since dog is a creature close to human society and is valorised more as a pet than anything else. The notion of companionship and friendship associated with this animal pushes it to assume a borderline identity unlike cow or goat, the other domesticated species, which can be defined more in terms of "use" than anything else. In the following sections through a study of three fictional narratives of postcolonial India I shall try to demonstrate how dog being an animal so close to man represents the anxiety of dwelling in the periphery of human/ animal divide. I will try to show how no easy representation of marginal identity in the form of dog can be done, and an anxiety of unrepresentability continues to haunt the postcolonial politics of celebrating peripheral identities.

In Satyajit Ray's short story "Ashomonjo Babur Kukur" ("The Dog of Ashomonjo Babu"), we find the story of a dog which has the peculiar capacity to laugh and which is reared up by his owner Ashomonjo Babu. Ashomonjo Babu, a middle-aged bachelor, a person abhorring company of other people, tries to enquire into this strange attribute of his pet but either is disbelieved or made fun of by others. But suddenly the fact of his dog's laughter gets revealed and flashed in the media. Several uninvited guests start knocking at his door to know more about the laughing dog. Finally, an American millionaire and collector of rare objects and species approach him to buy his dog. However, he wants the proof of its capacity to laugh. When every effort to make it laugh is at the point of failure the dog starts laughing. Ashomonjo Babu explains that the dog is laughing ironically as the Sahib thinks that he can buy everything with money.

Laughter, a quality peculiar to man, is attributed in this story to the dog. But does it destabilize hierarchy of human/animal or does it only act as an extended metaphor of human world where animal is used simply as a trope to point out the disproportion of hierarchy which is claimed to be structurally complete and universal?

By projecting the animal or bringing it in as a category this story seems to attempt at exorcizing our inherent lack of proper understanding of life and the world. Only when intelligent and powerful men behave irrationally the figure of the fool or the jester appears on-stage to laugh it off. Likewise the dog is not simply a dog but more rational than man ; it points towards a debased humanity being lower than even animals, the fallacy of which can only be realized if a dog laughs. So the human/animal division is sustained in the end, and the dog functions as a *deux-ex-machina* to provide

us with a moral, "useful" in the neo-colonized world of commerce where exchange value dominates everything and claims the status of use.

Here the "dog" is exchanged for "man". What man cannot do or say has been voiced through the dog. Here it might seem that the dog becomes an instrument in understanding the human world. Ascribing human features to dog can help us in understanding the human follies, but then in the end dog/animal remains alienated. The metaphoricity of dog seems like money – like currency note. It alienates labour power in a capitalist economy of exchange. Just as exchange seems to be the highest form of use for a commodity in market dog similarly becomes here a vehicle through which values of human world perhaps could be measured. Like the alienation or forgetting of labour power the immeasurable and indefinable animality remains the forgotten, alienated 'other' of the meaning-making apparatus. The impossibility of man's capacity to grasp the 'animal' that he is not is thus kept outside consideration in this economy. In this process exchange becomes use and animal becomes a functional metaphor for understanding the human world and the coming into being of such exchange at the cost of the alienation of labor-power/'animality', which is elided in the humanist discourse. We return to the vicious cycle of producing the man through negation of animal and then trying to define animal in terms of the human – with respect to and in comparison to it – thereby putting it to human 'use' of understanding his own self. It is like producing money as a medium of exchange and then evaluating commodity in terms of money and defining labour in terms of wage through which they can purchase the commodity. This use of analogy between the metaphoricity of 'animal' and exchange value in terms of money is to suggest a certain crisis of human meaning-making apparatus which is instrumental towards the human 'use' that comes into being through a process of alienation and forgetting and a certain faith in complete translatability of that 'use'.

Now, if we read the story in terms of metaphoricity then the dog becomes an instrument of understanding the human world – an object of use which can be exchanged finally in the end of the story where we realize why the dog is "used", and we understand what is truly human. Yet, since both complete exchange or translation or meaning-making is impossible (as, according to the logic of *bricoleur*, "not even in an ideal universe...would the projected end of knowledge ever coincide with its "means")[1] the story cannot simply be thought of as a comment on human world concealed in the metaphor of a dog-story. The one single sentence inverts the dominant voice, and animality gets reintroduced. When the sahib gets to listen to the dog's laughter then it is said that "Moody sahib started shaking as he sat down on the floor devouring that spectacle with his eyes. Ashomonjo Babu was sure that had he been an animal his ears would have stood erect" (Ray 165). What is meant by 'had he been an animal'? Is it not an ironic understatement that would make the readers

ponder if there is any chance of his being an animal? Adorno and Horkheimer would say:

> This power itself is once again only nature; just as the whole sophisticated machinery of modern industrial society is nature bent on tearing itself apart. (253)

Translating nature completely into culture — transforming use in its totality into exchange and translating events fully into language is directed towards demystification of all existent myths. However, decoding and translating into meaning that is thought of as complete and decipherable might regenerate new forms of totalitarianism and myth making. The human mastery over his own world might be reinstated in this process just as animality at the end of a story might produce effective morals for human society.

In the human world – because of the symbolic mode of communication – 'pure use' can only be a conceptual category that is not graspable except through exchange i.e., transposition to another image or object – a symbol. As no conceptually pure and fundamental use is available to man he is moved by a fantasy of complete exchange – complete and perfect projection of reality into signifiers/symbols – a fantasy that gets reflected and reproduced in new contexts every time. Both the categories of "animal" and "man" are such fantasies of exchangeable signs, seemingly complete in themselves.

Another strategy of reading the above story might be that of resisting the neo-colonial regime of which the sahib is a representative, whose authority is challenged by the dog's laughter. In the story the dog is given an agency – an agency of protest and irony. The same is with the owner of dog whose name *Ashomonjo* in Bangla means disparity and who marks a rupture in the officialdom of economic power, a tool of control of the so-called Third World by the so-called First World nations. The question of agency versus representation has been a major concern for Subaltern Studies. Whether, as Ranajit Guha would suggest, the subalterns can speak only at the time of insurgency, or whether, according to Gramscian idiom, they need to collaborate with the civil society to realize their fullest potential is a question taken up by Spivak in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" The answer is not simply that the Subaltern cannot speak but rather how the subaltern in each of us could speak. Playing with two registers of the word – 'representation' (as standing on behalf of something or someone) and re-presentation (as presenting again) – Spivak would prefer the latter as constant re-presentation of the self in understanding the subalternity of one's own being. Subaltern is as much inside as it is outside. Spivak writes:

> Derrida does not invoke 'letting the other(s) speak for himself' but rather invokes an 'appeal' to or 'call' to the 'quite-other' (*tout-autre* as

> opposed to a self-consolidating other), of 'rendering *delirious* that interior voice that is the voice of the other in us.' (Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' 89)

Self/other are categories as reciprocal as human/animal, and the two binaries are seemingly analogous. Since each is produced in terms of the other – the presence of the trace of one is there in the other – this must be true for both the binaries. The existing power structure co-constitutes both sides of the binary. So, it becomes necessary to think of power as it operates both in the centre as well as periphery, resulting in what Achille Mbembe would call 'mutual zombification' (102-133). To think of colonial power in terms of spatiality or temporality would only reduce it to metaphoricity where complete signification of exploitative logic is assumed and, therefore, effective resistances outside that power might be expected. Resistances offered to power are conceptualized by Bakhtin as degradation of the official hierarchy. Seriousness of the project of life as such is mocked at, degraded and the rules of management of life are put to comic interrogation. Drawing a conceptual difference between earth and the world, the former suggesting existence uncontaminated by human meaning-making apparatus and the latter as shaped and constituted by human interpretative and calculative categories, under the surveillance of power, Bakhtin comments:

> Degradation here means coming down to earth, the contact with earth as an element that swallows up and gives birth at the same time. To degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better. (Bakhtin 21)

This concept of an outside of the power can be put into question. Agamben in his discussion on the conceptual difference between the world and earth suggests that the Earth is completely undiscloesable and belongs to the realm of non-humanity but cannot totally be separated from the World which is completely discloseable and which belongs to the realm of humanity. Agamben quotes Heidegger:

> The earth cannot do without the open of the world if it itself is to appear as earth in the liberated throng of its closing itself. The world in turn cannot soar away from the earth if, as the governing breadth and path of every essential historical destiny, it is to ground itself on a resolute foundation. (qtd. in Agamben 2004:72)

So coming down to the earth, to animality, to realize the undisclosedness of one's being is a project that always remains incomplete as the earth and the world are co-constituted like animality and humanity or domination and resistance. This is an intensely Foucauldian argument where the subjectivity is liberated only when subjected to power. This power constitutes the subject and is not outside him. So, Bakhtin's carnival is not outside power but convivial with it. To be completely grounded to

the earth is a permanent human fantasy which, like the notion of pure use without exchange, remains an impossibility. All attempts to realize such fantasies result in totalitarian separation of the earth and the world or use and exchange in a conceptual paradigm. This gives way to an attempt for a total translation of the earth into the world, or the world into the earth both as mutually exchangeable; it is attempt at a total translation of use into exchange or exchange into use, and that of animality into humanity, or humanity into animality. It negates the fact that the signifier and the signified cannot be defined in terms of hierarchy but produced at the same time and cannot be completely translated into one another. Agamben writes: "The total humanization of the animal coincides with a total animalization of man" (Agamben 2004:77).

It is necessary now to think of colonialism beyond the idea of grounding and the absence of it as they are co-constituted in the Derridean sense. Colonialism is *an always already*, which is constantly in the process of becoming where the colonizer and colonized are reproduced ad infinitum without any spatio-temporal constraint. Derrida explains how displacement is complexly related to the space of one's belonging which gives identity and identifies the origin of being in its groundedness to a location which is projected to the being or the being is projected to that location – an assumption which Derrida calls ontopology. He says:

> All national rootedness, for example, is rooted first of all in the memory or the anxiety of a displaced—or displaceable—population. It is not only time that is "out of joint," but space, space in time, spacing. (Derrida 82-83)

However, this displacement is to be understood in terms of a lack in the completeness of the being rather than as a real physical space into which it is nonetheless translated. So the fantasy of displacement and groundedness are co-constitutive in the grammar of the being. Colonialism is to be understood then as why and how this grammar of being reproduces and channels itself in the connected histories of capitalist-colonialist-imperialist world.

Hence it is necessary to place the dog not as a concept but as conceptlessness, a 'position without identity' (that is how Spivak defines Subaltern in her Seminar talk 'The Trajectory of Subaltern in My Thought' [2004]) in the anonymous rhetoric of power. It must be a resistance which is produced by power, and which also produces power.

In Sadat Hasan Manto's short story 'The Dog of Tetwal', we find the story of another dog that can neither speak, nor laugh. The dog is a dog, as men are men in the story. However, the soldiers of both India and Pakistan ascribe to it a name, an identity and therefore humanity. And yet this act of anthropogenesis (to borrow from Agamben once more) is more a human fantasy which is taken away in the end as finally the dog will be

claimed to have died a dog's death. Anthropogenesis is then a fantasy which is ascribed only to be taken away or ascribed as it can be taken away. Drawing from Heidegger, Agamben asserts two points that concerns anthropogenesis in the modern world:

> [A] posthistorical man no longer preserves his own animality as undiscloseable, but rather seeks to take it on and govern it by means of technology (b) man, the shepherd of being, appropriates his own concealedness, his own animality, which neither remains hidden, nor is made an object of mastery, but is thought as such as, pure abandonment. (Agamben 2004: 80)

In this story of a stray dog running between the borders of the two nations, ontopological assumption of identity is put into question. The Indian soldiers, who name the dog Chapad Jhunjhun, hang a cardboard round its neck where its new name along with the words 'This is a Hindustani dog' are inscribed. When this dog crosses border and reaches the Pakistani camp, Subedar Himmat Khan orders that a new cardboard piece be put around its neck, inscribing a new name Sapar Sunsun and the words 'This is a Pakistani dog'. The dog is frightened by a bullet fired by Himmat Khan, and it is made to move towards the Hindustani side. Seeing it coming from the enemy camp, Jamadar Harnam Singh of Indian side opens fire on it while Himmat Khan continues his firing, making it impossible for the dog to come back to his side. Eventually, a bullet from Harnam Singh kills it. After its death Himmat Khan expresses regret: "Tch tch ... the poor thing became a martyr" and Harnam Singh utters, "He died a dog's death" (Manto 10). This hints perhaps the co-constitution of an insider and an outsider – a martyr who is sacrificed, or who sacrifices himself, and a dog who is simply killable. Note the conversation of the Indian Soldiers in the story:

> Digging up the ground with the heel of his boot, one of the soldiers said, "Now, even dogs will have to be either Hindustani or Pakistani!"
>
> The Jamadar took out another biscuit from his bag and threw it towards the dog,"Like the Pakistanis, Pakistani dogs too will be shot". (Manto5)

The difference between a Pakistani and a dog collapses, both are killable. This is how "the total management of biological life, that is, the very animality of man" (Agamben 2004:77) is worked out. It is done through 'pure abandonment' of the animal as Agamben suggests. When nature becomes totally translatable to culture then the nature that is not culture is always excluded. Agamben in *Homo Sacer* talked about the biopolitics where zeo or politically unqualified life is to be politically managed and protected thereby rendering the bare life abandoned – the life as such is managed, controlled and made killable by technologies of power. Agamben writes:

> The peculiar phrase "born with regard to life, but existing essentially with regard to the good life" can be read not only as an implication of being born (*ginomenē*) in being (*ousa*), but also as an inclusive exclusion (an *exceptio*) of *zoe* in the *polis*, almost as if politics were the place in which life had to transform itself into good life and in which what had to be politicized is always already bare life. In Western politics, bare life has the peculiar privilege of being that whose exclusion founds the city of men. (Agamben 1998:7)

The dog then here is not a metaphor for human but simply the dog – the unqualified animal existence whose animality can be taken away by power only to thrust it back upon it and to render it killable just as a state of exception can push people outside the realm of law and human society, transforming them into bare life so that they can be killed but not sacrificed. However, the sacred that is to be separated acts as a trace in this structure. In religious emotions, Agamben notes, there is hardly any difference between horror and disgust. One becomes martyr only to prove his highest capacity to be human: who can take decisions. On the other hand, one is killed or rendered killable only to prove his absolute animality without autonomy, thereby making him one who cannot make meaning of his death. But in modern biopower they are co-constitutive – the former is formed by 'an inclusive exclusion' of the latter and so always remains within. The death of the dog, which is martyrdom for the Pakistani soldier, is a dog's death for a Hindustani. Such is the politics of producing an 'inside' and 'insider'.

Mbembe discusses in details how military management of the slaves in a violently aggressive imperialist age of plundering made it necessary to create a borderline to distinguish between those who are free and those who are not. (Mbembe 66-101) Citizenship is born out of that exclusion. One becomes a citizen subject only by surrendering his autonomy to the state power. This autonomy is that of life as it is which is to be surrendered to become a political subject. This inclusive exclusion is embodied as bare life to be pushed outside the securities of citizenship which, however, is always already present within it.

Now coming back to the two functions played by dog, one destabilizes the authority of the officialdom through laughter, while the other accepts victimhood being at the no man's land. Both are conceptually outside humanity and, therefore, capable of ridiculing it in the first case and becoming the victim of it in the latter case. However, if animality is an inclusive exclusion then there cannot be an absolute outside where it can be relegated. The state of exception is always already in the everyday life. So the metaphoricity of dog is to be ripped apart. It cannot signify anything as it is itself non-representational. If represented, it ceases to remain the unqualified bare life and gets re-inscribed in the political rhetoric of humanity. What sheer absurdity it is to see a dog laugh! Does it fracture

the rhetoric of normalcy, or does it work towards its sustenance and perfection? What an absurdity it is when a dog is identified as Hindustani or Pakistani by soldiers engaged in a serious business like war? But hasn't one ever noticed the absurdity which is just its opposite when an entire ethnic group is slaughtered being thought of as non-human or inferior animals?

The last words of "The Dog of Tetwal" – "He has died a dogs death" reverberates the last words of Kafka's *The Trial* after the protagonist K. is killed as a result of a verdict of a trial, which he himself never realizes and which is never fully explained to him.

If carnival can be claimed to offer little resistances being a deviation from the official normativities of everyday, sanctioned by power, then can one not claim great deviations from regular peaceful operations of selfsame power like mass murder, genocide, war, communal riots as forms of carnival devised by power to maintain the normalcy of everyday? It is not only dogs who die trapped between the borders but also humans while trying to cross them. The moment one gets out of her or his own boundaries of nationhood s/he no longer remains a citizen and can be killed like a dog – like one without political identity whose *zoe* is not translated into biopolitics. So, the metaphoricity and reality collapse on one another just as the carnival and the everyday or martyrdom and dog's death. Also collapses the human-animal boundary. Both Kafka's protagonist K. and the dog in Manto's story die a dog's death. While discussing Kafka's works, Deleuze and Guattari write thus:

> We are no longer in the situation of an ordinary, rich language where the word dog, for example, would directly designate an animal and would apply metaphorically to other things...Kafka delibetately kills all metaphor, all symbolism, all signification, no less than all designation. Metamorphosis is the contrary of metaphor... There is no longer man or animal, since each deterritorializes the other, in a conjunction of flux, in a continuum of reversible intensities....Furthermore, there is no longer a subject of the enunciation, nor a subject of the statement. It is no longer the subject of the statement who is a dog, with the subject of the enunciation remaining "like" a man; it is no longer the subject of enunciation who is "like" a beetle, the subject of the statement remaining a man. Rather, there is a circuit of states that forms a mutual becoming, in the heart of a necessarily multiple or collective assemblage. (21-22)

Nabarun Bhattacharya, in his novel *Lubdhak* (which means the Dog star), writes a myth-like story on dogs. In the totemic world of human fantasy, like Freud, we can only expect to know the reality through a parable or at least get at the core of it.

In the city of Kolkata, it was decided by men to exterminate all dogs as they were thought unnecessary and misfit in the developing city

decorated with high-rises and multiplexes. It is not a metaphoric representation of human behavior but a legendary equivalence of the subtext of Nazi concentration camps and what was happening there. Carnage and migration of dogs are both realities whose equivalence is found in the human world. It is a lived reality for both species. Governmental pyrotechnique (technique that produces something and also itself gets reproduced by what it produces – it's a simultaneous act of co-constitution of the governmental apparatus and whatever it produces as governable subjects) produces both man and animal, each for the sake of managing the other.

In 2007, a program of mass-extermination of stray-dogs was undertaken in Bangalore after two incidents of death from dog-bite were reported (Karlekar 2008). The metonymic power of punishing many for the guilt of one seems astounding. The desire for purification, for cleansing to constitute an absolutely threat-free human world, leads to totalitarianism. The use can never be fully translated into exchange – can never be given a name but can only exist as an inclusive exclusion in the world of exchange. If the living world operates upon the principle of marking off some entities as 'the others', and is being used by the others in turn, then there cannot be any division of who are killable and who are not. Such divisions are results of the fantasies of the difference between self and the other where the 'human' ,'conscious' and the 'logical' subject-self has to be produced killing the animal within – through a process of its externalization. It is analogous to the process of meaning-making where there is always already a negation of the abyss of the non-understandable; it is analogous to the coming into being of value in a capitalist economy at the cost of alienation of labour-power that produces it; it is analogous also to the act of building metaphors of natural world to understand the human world and then suspending the natural/animal/non-human divisions in the final moment of arriving at meaning. It is important to remember that security is the logic on which governments declare emergencies, or on which Hitler legitimized his concentration camp to save the Germans from pollution and contamination. The parable of dogs written by Nabarun pushes the human activities as secondary, serving only as a background of what is happening in the world of dogs, or drawing upon them as allusions to understand what is happening in this dog-world. Auschwitz is remembered, striking us as an ironic equivalence of experiments conducted upon dogs and their sterilization for controlling proliferation with what was done to the Jews in the concentration camps. The parable and its mythification stop us from understanding the story in terms of what or whom it represents, thus freeing us from all ontopological assumptions. As in case of the Nazi ideology racism is not enough to explain the immense cruelty inflicted upon Jews. Agamben asserts that

> Nationalist Socialist biopolitics moves, instead, in a horizon in which the "care of life" inherited from eighteenth-century police science is,

> in now being founded on properly eugenic concerns, absolutized. Distinguished between politics (*Politik*) and police (*Polizei*), von Justi assigned the first a merely negative task, the fight against the external and internal enemies of the State, and the second a positive one, the care and growth of citizens' life. (Agamben 1998: 46-47)

According to Agamben, it is important to understand the "disappearance of the difference between the two terms: the police now becomes politics, and the care of life coincides with the fight against the enemy" (1998:46-47) to understand the activities of the Third Reich and also much of modern politics outside it. Only a myth can then make us realize the reality. The dog functions as a position without identity, a figure irreducible to ontopological assumptions, a self without representation, and the bare life that is present in modern biopolitics as an inclusive exclusion. It can be helpful in understanding the postcolonial structures of conviviality where biopolitics becomes thanatopolitics and management of the other of the biopolitical life,– making it isolatable, translatable, and killable. These are processes rendered necessary for the production and protection of legal subjects. These are overdetermined structures which overwrite colonialism and help us understanding the latter beyond ontopological terms.

In this essay I have attempted to read how through fictional narrative dog can act as a powerful agent of understanding the predicament of postcolonial society. Colonization, instead of being read as a historico-political "event", is conceptualized here as a structure of human thinking and dwelling in the world through the exclusion or management of the "animal", the "other", that exists disturbingly at the border of the stable, secured human self. In the way of reading the various strategies of employing the image of dog it has been successively pointed out how the "animal" can act as a metaphor, a condition of metamorphosis and a subject of analogy. Even when we tell the story of a metamorphosis of dog to man and therefore hint at the reverse – the transformation of man into dog – we are still referring to a "human" world. But humanity seems a threshold phenomenon produced at the expense of keeping the animal within outside its borderlands. Even the stories and parables we read are points of references to human world-order.

It is impossible to narrate what is outside the threshold except using it to talk about the inside. *Lubdhak* is a novella which reverses the abandonment and talks only about a dog-world affected by human species. Men are a marginal presence in the narrative. Without human commentators the non-human actors refer to what they have to suffer everyday at the hands of mankind. The narrative takes an irrational turn of faith and religiosity as the dogs supposedly receive instructions from their guardian spirit to abandon the city. The possibility of an apocalypse haunts the narrative as a curse of human cruelty upon the dogs. If the mass migration

of dogs reminds us of mass displacement that characterizes postcolonial civilizations, the partition of territories and the redrawing of national boundaries then the apocalypse suggests the possibility of a nuclear winter which is a creation of human security project against its "enemies".

Pure and simple analogy collapses the supposed difference between human and animal world. Both live the possibility of abandonment anytime, any moment, to survive the security project of the maintenance of "life". Both can be "positions without identity", thresholds as well as margins, through the negation of which history, subjectivity and reason become meaningful. Keeping the "animal" outside the reasonable human self renders it irrational and inscrutable. The violent democracies all over the world, where the benevolent project of life saving governance fails, demonstrate the eruption of such irrational. When a country and the globe at large are shaken by terrorism and civil war it is important to consider the eruption of such irrational. Nobody can read the instruction of a dog-divine who from the starry heights above, undisclosed to man, can affect destruction of which he will have no knowledge. In the face of the violence of reason epistemic counter-violence becomes an impossible possibility. The narrative of *Lubdhak* , though a complete dog-story, challenges the realism of human narratives. The mythic/*puranic* mode of story-telling forces us to face the radical undecidability of apocalypse in the face of human decision to make life secure:

> 65 million years ago a 10 Km asteroid collided the earth and dinosaurs became extinct due to that explosion. It has already been told that this kind of total apocalypse, total destruction happened 450, 350, 225, 190 million years ago as well. In 1989, an asteroid came 1000 meters within earth's orbit. The earth had been just there even 6 hours before. In 1996, May, an asteroid of similar size escaped collision with earth for just 4 hours.
>
> The violent dog unleashed against Kolkata is approaching with a speed of 1 lakh Km per hour...The furious dog will collide with Kolkata and evaporate as ashes but the crater created by it would be 10 times in diameter and twice as much in depth. The dog will blow up stones 100 times its weight. After the first hit there will be no air for a while. Kolkata will burn like suppressed fire. This will be followed by the last breath of a million storms. Kolkata will burn and melt into ashes. Dust will cloud the sun like armor. No one can say how long the cold nights will continue. The temperature of earth-crust will go down to 20 degree centigrade...Through the declaration of this ruthless prophesy Lubdhak, the Dog-legend, has arrived its last. Kolkata is now a passive waiting veterinary asylum. Its punishment is death. (Bhattacharya 2006:62-63, translation mine)

Notes

1. Spivak, "Translator's Preface", xix. The idea of bricoleur is borrowed from Claude Levi-Strauss and is placed as a concept as opposed to engineer. Spivak writes: "the bricoleur makes do with things that were meant perhaps for other ends." (xix). She further elaborates "The reason for bricolage is that there can be nothing else. No engineer can make the "means" –the sign—and the "end" –meaning—become self-identical." (xix)

Work Cited:

Adorno, Theodor W, and Max Horkheimer, "Notes and Drafts". *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, London: Verso, 1992. Print.

Agamben, Giorgio "Introduction" and "Politics, or Giving Form to Life". *Homo Sacer*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998. Print.

_____ ."World and Earth" and "Animalization" . *The Open: Man and Animal*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004. Print.

Bakhtin, M. M. *Rabelais and his World* . Bloomimgton: Indiana University Press, 1984. Print.

Bhattacharya, Nabarun *Lubdhak*. Kolkata: Abhijan Publishers, 2006. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari, "What is a Minor Literature?" *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986. Print.

Derrida, J. *Specters of Marx: the state of the debt, the work of mourning, and the new international*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.

Karlekar, Hiranmoy *Savage Human and Stray Dogs: A Study in Aggression*, New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., 2008. Print.

Manto, Sadat Hasan "The Dog of Tetwal" in *Translating Partition*. Ed. Ravikant and Tarun K. Saint.New Delhi: Katha, 2001, 1-10. Print.

Mbembe, Achille "The Aesthetics of Vulgarity", "On Private Indirect Government" and "On Private Indirect Government". *On the Postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.Print.

Ray, Satyajit "Ashomonjo Babur Kukur" (The Dog of Ashomonjo Babu) . *Shera Satyajit*, Kolkata: Ananda Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1992, 151-166. Print.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakraborty "Translator's Preface". *Of Grammatology*. Jacques Derrida, Delhi:Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1994, ix-lxxxvii. Print.

_____. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Colonial Discourse/Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*. Ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, 66-111. Print.

_____. "The Trajectory of Subaltern in my Work", Keynote Address . "Voices A UCSB Series" [9/2004] [*Humanities*] [Show ID: 8840].

FRANTZ FANON: BETWEEN ANNIHILATORY AND RESTITUTIVE VIOLENCE

Pramod K. Nayar

In Pakistani author Bapsi Sidhwa's (1938) *Cracking India*, a novel about the Indian Partition of 1947, friends turn bitter enemies when the British leave the subcontinent. The novel maps the slow descent into chaos of Indian and Muslim populations massacring each other as the British, having done the damage by 'constructing' the spectre of communalism, abandon their formerly subjects. Nigerian-British author Buchi Emecheta's in her novel *Destination Biafra* (1982) deals with the Nigerian civil war in which cruelties were perpetrated by the formerly colonized on each other. In all of African writer Chinua Achebe's fiction we see the alienation of the individual as well as a culture/society due to the impact of a brutal colonial regime. In Australian Thomas Keneally's novel, *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (1973), the 'half-breed' Jimmie, whose soul seems lost under the oppression and injustices of colonialism, suddenly explodes into inexplicable violence. The acts of barbaric killing are, Jimmy self-reflexively acknowledges, inhuman. Each of these novels suggest that postcolonial violence is a legacy of colonialism: whether in the form of communalism, economic exploitation or the creation of a bourgeois class that inherits the mantle of their former colonial masters.

When Fanon opened *The Wretched of the Earth* with a chapter on violence, he ensured that it would remain the one theme consistently associated with his thought. Fanon has been seen as an apostle of violence, one for whom violence is a way of life. Diverse thinkers (Arendt 1970; Taylor 1992: 65; Bulhan 1985: 137-153; Nandy 1992: 33-34; Serequeberhan 1994) have sought to understand Fanonian violence, a strand that seems at odds with his insistence (especially in the powerful *Black Skin, White Masks*) on a universal humanism. I have elsewhere (Nayar 2011) proposed that Fanon's work embodies a 'postcolonial humanism' in which the ethics of recognition of difference becomes the first step on the route to the new humanism, a humanism that rejects the Enlightenment/European variety in favour of a more inclusive one.

Fanon, I argue here, suggests two levels of violence. Colonial violence, or the violence of the colonizer, that annihilates the (i) body of the colonized (ii) the psyche of the colonized and (iii) the culture of the colonized. This kind of violence is rooted in the very structure of colonialism and occurs across multiple domains: economic, cultural, psychological, physical and spatial. It is colonial violence and its trauma that leads to the second form of violence – from the colonized's side. The

violence of the colonized is restitutive and restoratory violence, an attempt on the part of the desperate, frustrated and alienated colonized subject to retrieve a certain dignity and sense of the Self that colonial violence had destroyed. The first section of the essay explores in detail Fanon's account of colonialism's annihilatory violence. In the second section I turn to Fanon's theorization of the subjugated native's restitutive violence.

Colonial Annihilatory Violence

In Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*, Winterbottom, the District Officer, proudly tells his subordinate:

> I think I can say with all modesty that this change came after I had gathered and publicly destroyed all firearms, except of course, this collection here. You will be going there frequently on tour. If you hear anyone talking about Otiji-Egbe, you know that they are talking about me. Otiji-Egbe means "Breaker of Guns." I am even told that all children born in that year belong to a new age-grade of the Breaking of the Guns. (1977: 37)

The violence of the Officer's act has entered into the cultural memory of the colonized. It is not possible to distinguish, Achebe suggests, which is the greater violence – the brutality of the oppressor, or the traumatic recall of the events into the very idiom and speech of the colonized.

In Ghanian playwright Ama Ata Aidoo's play *Anowa* (1970) there is a suggestion that Kofi Aiko's impotence might be the result of imperial domination. His emasculation becomes a symbol of the erosion of the sense of the Self under colonialism. Even the histories of the colonial 'discovery' of African, Australian or South American cultures are histories of this violence-cast-as-discovery. Australian Aboriginal author Mudrooroo (1938-) writes of Australian, Maori and New Zealand history:

> All New Zealand schoolchildren were taught about Captain James Cook's discovery of New Zealand and his historic landfall … But what the schoolchildren are not told is that Cook's first landing was marked by the killing of a Maori called Te Maro, shot through the heart by a musket bullet. (qtd. In Crane 2001: 395)

What each of these postcolonial texts emphasizes is the cultural violence of colonialism, whether in their histories of the African or Asian nations, their evangelicalism or their civilizational missions. Colonialism's cultural mission, Achebe, Aidoo and Mudrooroo suggest, results in the erasure of local/native cultures. This erasure is clearly an act of violence, for it alienates the colonized from her/his traditions, histories and cultures.

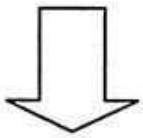
Colonialism, emphasizes Fanon, is primarily a state of violence. All relations between colonizer and colonized were violent. Violence is also what the colonial master uses to ensure the continual obedience of the colonized. Fanon was concerned with various forms of violence. He

explored the hard, physical violence of colonial rule, the corporeal manifestations of this violence, the cultural domination through education, the violence of the language used when talking about/to the natives, the biomedical field (especially psychiatry) which he treated as a sophisticated form of violence against the native, but one cast in the form of scientism.

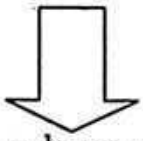
Fanon sees the colonial system as perpetuating violence on the black at multiple levels. This results in a deeply fractured self with no moorings, stability or sense of identity. The inferiority complex of the black, writes Fanon, is the result of a 'double process': primarily economic but also the internalization, or what he calls 'epidermalization', of this inferiority (*Black Skin* 4).

Colonial violence affected every aspect of the day-to-day life of the colonized. For instance, Fanon notes that colonialism begins by reorganizing the physical space of the colony, demarcating the 'black' and 'white' towns, and eventually domesticating nature itself. It then proceeds to dehumanize the native, making him (Fanon's is of course a gendered reading until such time as he comes to the question of women in colonialism in his controversial essay, 'Algeria Unveiled' in A Dying Colonialism) lose his sense of Self. Eventually the cumulative effect of the dehumanization results in hysteria among the colonized. He loses his sense of Self and also his cultural moorings and cultural. A map of Fanon's trajectory of violence would be as follows:

the body of the colonized



the psyche of the colonized



the culture of the colonized

Colonialism, therefore, first targets the individual body, then the psyche and finally, the culture itself.

Territory, Geography and the Violence of Space

Colonial violence begins with a physical separation of the world of the colonizer (what he terms 'enemy territory', *Wretched* 80) from that of the colonized. The colonial world is a compartmentalized world: 'the colonized world is a world divided in two. The dividing line, the border, is represented by the barracks and the police stations' (*Wretched* 3). The former is ordered, peaceful and neat, while the latter is 'a world with no space, people are piled one on top of the other, the shacks squeezed tightly together'. It is a 'famished sector, hungry for bread, meat, shoes, coal, and light' (4). The colonization of the land through technology or European

modernization renders it unrecognizable, except for the bush and jungle. This dual nature of all spaces – whether geographical or demographic – is central to the very condition of colonialism.

The territorial violence of colonialism is a reordering of the land that the natives have used for generations. It divided people arbitrarily, often making deep divisions between people who had coexisted for a long time. In a powerful passage in *Maps* (1999) Somalian novelist Nuruddin Farah describes geographical colonial violence:

> Someone else insisted that passengers be told where the "inexistent" border used to be – inexistent, because Somalis never admitted it ... Non-Somalis, because they were total strangers or knew no better, looked at maps, where they found a curvy line, drawn to cut one Somali people from another. (1999: 132)

Nigerian playwright and poet Wole Soyinka also points to the geographical violence of colonialism that divides people:

> I accept that entity, Nigeria, as a space into which I happen to have been born, and therefore a space within which I am bound to collaborate with fellow occupants in the pursuit of justice and ethical life ... Expressions such as 'territorial integrity' and the 'sacrosanctity of boundaries,' those relics of colonial master-slave bequest that abjectly glorify the diktat of colonial powers, are meaningless in such a context. (1996: 133)

This geographical violence results in cultural alienation as well, as Farah's text and Soyinka's statement seems to suggest. Congolese philosopher, novelist and critic VY Mudimbe (1941) echoes Fanon when he notes that colonization was the 'domination of physical space, the reformation of the natives' minds, and the integration of local economic histories into the Western perspective' (1988: 2)..

Nature itself, Fanon suggests, is domesticated and colonized, and is accompanied by the colonization of culture and even imaginations. Signs of colonial authority such as the barracks, the police station, frontiers and their barriers, hospitals dot the landscape. The construction of railroads and the draining of the swamps alter the topography. Such a transformation of the land is treated as its modernization, where all development is deemed to stem from the white man (*Wretched* 182). These are acts of violence as well.

In *Black Skin* Fanon also uses an interesting spatial trope to signify both colonial colour prejudice and its propensity for violence. Speaking of this psychiatric experience, Fanon describes his claustrophobic condition of being trapped by his skin colour: 'I was walled in' (89). The 'fact of blackness' is a spatial reality as well: the black body's skin is the

boundary which also determines the social boundaries in the colonial situation. Fanon recounts how he was constantly referred to only as the 'Negro physician' or the 'Negro teacher'. It was the colour of his skin and not, his 'refined manners … knowledge of literature, or … understanding of the quantum theory' that 'marked' him (89). The skin is thus a trap, a confined space from which there is no escape. He finds himself 'sealed into that crushing objecthood' (82), into 'thingness' (170). This is how the black man always sees himself: always in unfavourable comparison with something else. This comparison, for Fanon, occurs at the level of spaces occupied, including the spaces of the body and skin.

Embodied Violence and the Alienation of the Self

In an unforgettable and haunting passage in *Black Skin* Fanon writes:

> I had to meet the white man's eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me. In the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema ... I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects ... I took myself far off from my own presence ... What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a haemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood? (84-5)

Fanon here powerfully foregrounds trauma first as violence upon the black body as a 'racial epidermal' schema (84). The identity of the black is confined to and written upon the colour of the skin. The skin, the surface of the body, becomes the key focus of a racialized identity (Gauch 2002). The white man sees only the black skin, it becomes the foundation for all colonial relations. The black man is reduced to his skin and body, there is no depth, only surface.

The embodied nature of colonial violence and the inscription of racist colonial discourse upon the black man's body was a major concern for Fanon. The black body in Fanon's reading is fragmented, dissolved and exploded (Prabhu 2006). Commenting on the use of torture by French police on Algerian revolutionaries Fanon suggests that such sadistic measures are intrinsic to the very nature of the occupant-occupied relationship (*African* 66). Violence upon the body, then, is the hallmark of the colonial condition. Each body, white or black, is 'sealed into his own peculiarity' (*Black Skin* 31) in the colonial situation. When the black man is forced to see himself through the eyes of the white man the result is the loss of the sense of self: 'The arrival of the white man in Madagascar shattered not only its horizons but its psychological mechanisms' (*Black Skin* 72). The black body becomes an object rather than a feeling-thinking body, soulless and open to violation in the colonial scheme of things.

The white man's vision literally breaks up the black man's body and, as a result, the black who sees himself through the white man's eyes, sees

himself as fractured, dismembered and fractured – a condition of 'nausea' (*Black Skin* 84. On Fanon's nausea see Ahluwalia 2003). This nausea is of 'dislocation' (Fanon's term), a feeling of revulsion at one's self because he has been rejected, as Fanon puts it, 'hated, despised, detested' by an entire race (*Black Skin* 89). The nausea is a feeling of complete alienation from one's Self because he has been rejected by the white man. The nauseated black body experiences a massive upheaval, and it results in a crisis of identity. It is, therefore, in the white man's gaze that the nausea of the black man emerges. The black man is now aware of himself only as a despicable black body. (This emphasis on the white man's gaze that constructs the black man as a black body and nothing more is akin, critics have suggested, to the way the male gaze constructs the female as a mere body, see Bergner 1995.) This nausea is the consequence of colonialism's psychic violence. It results in the annihilation of the black Self.

White psychiatric practices, Fanon notes, often diagnose and pronounce such colonized Africans as 'hysterical'. However, such a diagnosis relies entirely on psychoanalysis, and ignores, in Fanon's reading, the social conditions of the hysteria. 'Hysteria', he argues, is a bodily manifestation of an alienated psyche. The images and signs that constitute the black man's hysteria are signifiers of very real and painful encounters with colonialism's violent racial situations (Gordon 2006: 15). Fanon suggests that the bodily spasms and contortions are 'outlets' for the tortured self (*Wretched* 19). He proposes that the colonized needs to find some means of expending his frustrated, annihilating psychic energies. Fanon sees tribal and community dances as offering a way out of this high-pressure situation where rage against the colonial master finds expression. The rage, writes Fanon, is 'channeled, transformed and spirited away'. Such dances may involve symbolic killings and extreme violence, but is essentially one of the few modes of expression available to the colonized (*Wretched* 19-20).

What Fanon examines here is the mechanism of coping with colonial domination. It is interesting that Fanon locates these mechanisms in tribalisms and local cultural practices because eventually it is the retrieval of these practices that constitute a cultural nationalism as well. Violence therefore fuels the return to native articulations such as dance, voodoo and music. Many of these practices and rituals might be forgotten (*Wretched* 20), but could be drawn upon for purposes of nationalism – a project that characterizes the postcolonial state.

Hegemony, Violence and Cultural Trauma[1]

Everything I say this monkey does do,
I don't know what to say this monkey won't do.
I sit down, monkey sit down too,
I don't know what to say this monkey won't do.

This is Lestrade speaking about the native, Makak's mimicking of the white man's ways in Derek Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1970: 223). It captures with savage ferocity and the contempt of the colonial master for the colonized who seeks to be as white as possible, but ends up being an object of ridicule. This mimicry is the consequence of the violent erasure of native culture in colonialism, and the resultant cultural trauma experienced by the colonized.

In *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* Jimmie discovers that his community's old ways of life have been corrupted by colonialism:

> What did Tullam and Mungara stand for now? Tribal men were beggars puking Hunter River rotgut sherry in the lee of hotel shit-houses. Tribal elders, who cared for initiation teeth and knew where the soil-stones of each man were hidden and how the stones could be distinguished, lent out their wives to white men for a suck from a brandy bottle. (7)

Native cultures, as can be seen from both Walcott's and Keneally's descriptions, were rotting with mimic men, natives with no sense of dignity and the loss of a cultural identity itself. Fanon offers a definition of cultural trauma in 'Racism and Culture':

> We witness the destruction of cultural values, of ways of life. Language, dress, techniques, are devalorized … The social panorama is destructed; values are flaunted, crushed, emptied … a new system of values is imposed. (*African* 33-4)

The 'inferior' colonized is constructed through a systematic and violent process of hegemonic domination through cultural apparatuses such as 'books, newspapers, schools and their texts, advertisements, films, radio' (*Black Skin* 118). In *Wretched* Fanon argues that the violence of the colonial situation is 'brought into the home and mind of the native' by intermediaries (4). The values, beliefs and prejudices of the white cultures are transplanted into African nations and minds to effect cultural domination. The colonized race's collective unconscious equates black skins with ugliness, sin and darkness. There can be no moral black, argues Fanon, because the colonizing stereotype and ways of thinking have convinced the black man that he is immoral (*Black Skin* 148-9). The result is a forcible deculturation of the colonized.

Fanon thus sees the violence on the land, black bodies and psyche (discussed above) as contiguous with the violence perpetrated culturally. Here Fanon shifts his analysis of violence from its physical form to violence as hegemony and as cultural trauma. Fanon argues that psychic and individual violence is only a narrower version of larger, cultural violence perpetrated at the level of the entire colonized society. Postcolonial literature abounds in accounts of such a (Fanonian) condition of cultural trauma.

Kenyan activist-novelist Ngugi wa Thiong'O in *The River Between* writes: 'the white man had come to Siriana, and Joshua and Kabonyi had been converted. They had abandoned the ridges and followed the new faith' (1965: 5). In the Zimbabwean Tsitsi Dangarembga's (1959) *Nervous Conditions*, Nhamo who leaves the ancestral village realizes that when he comes home, he is unable to deal with his native culture anymore. 'The poverty', writes Dangarembga, 'begins to offend him' (1988: 7). Elesin in Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* is categorical in his denunciation of colonial violence on the colonized's culture and psyche: '[It] turned me into an infant in the hands of unnamable strangers ... My will was squelched in the spittle of an alien race' (211-12).Ngugi, Dangarembga, Soyinka all point to the disruption of a way of life, and the consequent cultural trauma of alienation. The 'squelched will' is the annihilation of the self in colonialism.

One major domain in which this cultural trauma occurs, in Fanon's reading, is language. Fanon argues that the very identity of the black man depends on his ability to acquire fluency in the colonizer's language. He writes: 'The Negro of the Antilles will be proportionately whiter – that is, he will come closer to being a real human being – in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language' (*Black Skin* 8). And later: 'To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture. The Antilles Negro who wants to be white will be the whiter as he gains greater mastery of the cultural tool that language is' (25). This theme of the European language as a cultural weapon that destroys the native is again a common theme in postcolonial literature.

Fanon anticipates, as one can see, postcolonial writers like Rushdie, Caribbean-British VS Naipaul and Soyinka satirize the formerly colonized who stay nostalgically rooted in colonial times/cultures:

> No spectacular undertaking will make us forget the legalized racism, the illiteracy, the flunkeyism generated and maintained in the very depth of the consciousness of our people. (*African* 101)

Fanon is addressing the legacy of colonialism here. In Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) the Methwold Estate is full of mimic men and women. Here Indians seek perfect British accents and live in houses called 'Buckingham', 'Sans Souci', 'Escorial' and 'Versailles' as Rushdie mocks the colonized's desire to be more white than white. The very consciousness of the people, Rushdie suggests, has been altered by the contact with the colonizer's culture. In Soyinka's satiric take in *Death and the King's Horseman* he satirizes such mimic men. The Yoruba women are mimicking Englishmen's speeches in order to mock Amusa, a Yoruba who has joined the police force and tries to behave like his white masters. The Yoruba women aim to bring home to him through this little charade-masquerade how absurd the mimicry is.

Your invitation card please,
Who are you? Have we been introduced?
And who did you say you were?
Sorry, I didn't quite catch your name.
May I take your hat?
If you insist. May I take yours? (1984: 177-8)

In VS Naipaul's *The Middle Passage* we see this legacy in the formerly colonized's abandonment of their cultures and the mimicking of their former European masters. Naipaul describes Trinidadians and their deculturation thus:

> A peasant-minded, money-minded community, spiritually cut off from its roots, its religion reduced to rites without philosophy set in a materialistic colonial society: a combination of historical accidents and national temperament has turned the Trinidad Indian into a complete colonial, even more Philistine than the white. (1969: 89)

In *The Enigma of Arrival*, Naipaul describes how, when he was younger, he had images of the 'lowing herd winding o'er the lea' from the English poet Thomas Gray's famous poem 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard', while his idea of a cow was that of the animals pictured on the condensed milk-cans even though no such herds existed on his island of Trinidad! (1987: 38, 80, 297). Each of this serves to exemplify the violent invasion of the consciousness and imagination of the natives by Western culture, so that they can now only talk, think and even dream like the Westerners.

We see an example of such a deculturation in Jeanette Armstrong's 'This is a Story' (1996). White settlers build dams over the rivers in Canada as a result of which salmon migration, the principal source of food for the natives, ends. The natives then start eating the white man's food. Kyoti, the protagonist of Armstrong's tale, treats this 'incorporation' of the white man's food as indicative of the loss of native culture itself as they (the natives) assimilate the colonizer's culture. Armstrong, like Soyinka, Dangarembga, Ngugi and Naipaul, is concerned with the violent 'deculturation' of the native with the arrival of colonialism. When the native starts thinking in the language of the white, when s/he ingests the food/culture of the colonized, they simply stop being black or brown: they become deracinated and 'white-like', so to speak. Even when the black man – the native intellectual – seeks to speak out against colonialist thought he is unable to think/speak outside the terrain already mapped out to him, a terrain that is 'continental' and 'national' rather than local and tribal. Fanon calls this total domination of the black man's thinking a 'racialization of thought' (*Wretched* 150). It is this cultural alienation that Fanon sees at the heart of colonial violence.

Fanon argues, therefore that colonial domination was possible because of a violent reductionism, where the colonized was reduced to stereotypes

of evil (a 'quintessence of evil', as he puts it in *Wretched* 6), freezing the native in a static mould and, this reductionism in turn dehumanizes the native: he is made to feel like an animal because he is addressed, described and believed to be an animal by the colonial apparatus. Fanon writes:

> He [the colonizer] speaks of the yellow man's reptilian motions, of the stink of the native quarter, of breeding swarms, of foulness, of spawn, of gesticulations. (*Wretched* 7)

The act of classifying and naming serves to dehumanize the native into an animal. The demolition of his cultural identity results in the obliteration of his subjectivity: one leads to the other in colonialism. The colonized lack all agency, as individuals and as a culture. This is the cultural trauma of colonialism manifest at the level of both individuals and communities/collectives.

As a result of such persistent violence, the native finds his self being slowly but thoroughly destroyed. Fanon saw colonialism as a condition where the colonized lost all sense of the self, personality and subjectivity, or what he called the 'expulsion of [the] self' (*Dying* 65). And yet, there emerge modes through which the suppressed anxieties and violence emerge in the colonized. When both the individual-self and the collective-cultural identity are destroyed by colonial violence, a counter- or restitutive violence will also emerge, Fanon shows, at both the levels. It is to this role of violence as a reconstructive strategy of the self to which I now turn.

The Colonized's Restitutive Violence

Fanon's critique of violence also examines the ways in which the colonized is driven to violence as a means of recuperating his Self.

'The colonized man liberates himself in and through violence', wrote Fanon in *Wretched* (44). The colonized native, for a long time beaten into the ground, begins to carve out a new self first in the form of anti-colonial resistance, which takes the form of violence. Thus violence is preceded by a moment of consciousness and awareness where the colonized recognizes his oppression. Once this recognition dawns, then the violent insurrection against the oppressor occurs.

Violence in Fanon, I argue, is directed at two specific goals and corresponds to two kinds of violence (I am adopting here the arguments of Kawash 1999 and Seshadri-Crooks 2002). The first goal is the overthrow of the colonizer in the form of the anti-colonial struggle. The violence of the anti-colonial struggle is 'instrumental violence', and is essentially a social project, directed at the community as a whole. The second goal emerges from the first one. In the process of the anti-colonial struggle, argues Fanon, the colonized's self-realization and the retrieval of subjectivity is achieved. This retrieved subjectivity, dignity and identity, for Fanon, quite possibly leads to death and annihilation. But this

annihilation would be one of choice and self-hood rather than abjection, with Fanon arguing that he would be willing to accept 'dissolution' (*Black Skin* 170). It is in this second mode of violence, directed at self-realization, that Fanon finds the possibilities of a new identity and humanism. This kind of violence seeking a remaking of the Self is 'absolute violence', and is essentially an individual project directed at the individual self.

If instrumental violence seeks to re-establish the cultural identity of the natives which the colonial situation had erased, absolute violence seeks to retrieve a Self that has been buried under the humiliations of the colonial master. The liberated self with its new subjectivity marks the moment where 'new men' emerge. When such 'new men' gather as a collective it generates a total rupture in the world.

From this newly self-realized native, Fanon suggests towards the end of *Black Skin*, emerges the 'actional' man, where the former slave rediscovers his capacity to love and respect the 'basic values that constitute a human world' (173). Violence therefore becomes the preliminary to (i) a new subjectivity and cultural identity for the black/colonized (ii) a new humanism. This is something to be kept in mind: violence in Fanon is always the route to self-determination and identity formation. It enables the colonized to generate their self-identity and therefore proceed to build a new social order (Gordon 1995: 71; Roberts 2004: 142-3).

Fanon does not, let us note, emphasize violence for itself. He treats violence as restitution, a response and a liberatory force through which the oppressed colonized can express himself. It is instrumental violence when used in the anti-colonial struggle because it is a response to the violence of the white man, and seeks to overthrow the colonial regime. Thus the anti-colonial violence is part of the dialectic whose other pole is colonial violence. The entire relationship between white and black was forged in violence: locked into a dialectic of violence by the very nature of the colonial system, the colonized has little option but to use violence in his struggle. The relationship was also sustained through violence and the only way it can be broken is through further violence, this time through the violence of the colonizer. It is the desperation of the colonial situation – individual and cultural alienation and annihilation – that leads the colonized into violence.

Anti-colonial Struggles and 'Instrumental Violence'

Fanon believed that the very nature of the political space in colonialism is extremely skewed and exclusionary (Sekyi-Otu 87): the African has no role in the political system which is entirely controlled by the whites and in which the African is only a passive subject. Violence therefore is a means of inserting himself into this political space.

In the context of colonialism, the victim of unrelenting violence himself becomes violent. It becomes his mission to carve out a space for

himself, to put himself, if possible, in the settler's position: 'for the colonized, life can only materialize from the rotting cadaver of the colonist' (*Wretched* 50). Anti-colonial struggles, therefore, represent a 'breaking-out' of the colonized in violence as a mode of attaining a measure of self-hood. This claiming of self-hood is necessary because of the very nature of the political in colonialism.

The political is a relationship between individuals in a community, and between subjects and their representatives/governors. But his relationship has been subverted in the colonial context. The African is completely erased and negated in the colonial system: he has no say in the system of governance, no rights, no claims. Thus, the political space in colonialism does not provide any access for the black subject.

For Fanon, violence becomes a mode of reclaiming that space, or what he terms 'absolute praxis' (*Wretched* 44). If there is no 'proper' political relationship then the state descends into violence. In other words, the absence of a truly political space would result in recourse to the state of violence.

A violent struggle – what he termed a 'murderous and decisive struggle' against the colonizer, Fanon argued, was the only means of overthrowing the oppressor. Fanon regards this violence as essential to the national project:

> We have said that the violence of the colonized unifies the people. By its very structure, colonialism is separatist and regionalist. Colonialism does not simply state the existence of tribes; it also reinforces it and separates them. The colonial system encourages chieftaincies and keeps alive the old Marabout confraternities. Violence in its practice is totalizing, national. It follows that it is closely involved in the liquidation of regionalism and tribalism. Thus, the nationalist parties show no pity at all toward the caids and the customary chiefs. The liquidation of the caids and the chiefs is the preliminary to the unification of the people. (51)

Fanon is not pleading for violence that establishes a European-Enlightenment model of national identity. He wishes for a liberating violence that ushers in a national identity supporting difference. He does not for a moment consider the European model of nationalism – which he deems totalitarian, homogenizing and therefore violent in itself when led by the social elites. The elites, he acknowledges, are not really interested in engaging the masses. Instead, they have their own agenda that willfully 'tramples over the little local histories' (67-8). Instrumental violence therefore dismantles the oppressive structures of not only colonialism but also of old-fashioned humanisms.

Fanon argues that the anti-colonial struggle does not end with the exit of the oppressor. What is essential for a true decolonization is for the

formerly colonized to clear their heads of the ideas and myths generated by the colonial. This means, the project of purging the colonial cannot end with the instrumental violence of the anti-colonial struggle. It must be carried on into the process of decolonization for the true Self to emerge, and from which a better, new humanism is possible. In other words, Fanon sees the instrumental violence of the anti-colonial struggle only as an early step or stage in the retrieval of the Self, the true 'human' within the colonized. A second step, in decolonization, is essential as well.

'Absolute Violence', Self-realization and Humanism

Fanon argues that the anti-colonial struggle does not end with the exit of the oppressor. What is essential for a true decolonization is for the formerly colonized to clear their heads of the ideas and myths generated by the colonial (an instance of hegemonic and epistemic violence). 'Absolute violence' (as Kawash terms it) therefore exceeds the goal of merely evicting the colonizer and seeks a purging of the ideas, myths and notions planted in the colonized by the colonizer – a decolonization of the mind.

It is only after the colonial master's implanted worldview has been completely erased that a new Self can emerge for the colonized. We could therefore argue that absolute violence has a greater value in Fanonian thought: for this form of violence is truly liberatory in seeking something far more than an immediate goal. The decolonization of the mind is this true liberation.

Fanon suggests a mode of 'unlearning' all the 'untruths planted within him [the black] by the oppressor if a fuller personality has to develop (*Wretched* 233). Decolonization is a violent purging of colonial ideas from the mind and imagination of the colonized. This suggests that violence is not merely about exiling the colonial master but ensuring agency and self-determination. This is violence in 'excess' (Kawash237) of the instrumental need of the colonized. Fanon locates the possibility of a new subjectivity in this form of violence.

The project of the revival of the self, thus, also demands violence. Violence becomes a means of acquiring a measure of self-respect for the colonized: 'the former slave needs a challenge to his humanity, he wants a conflict, a riot' (*Black Skin* 172). It helps assert a minimal amount of agency in response to a condition of absolute servility and suppression.

Fanon sees violence as both an assertion of agency as well as a means to recover it. Violence here is to be seen as praxis, an acting out, or a performance in which the self is rediscovered. Fanon writes: 'The colonized subject discovers reality and transforms it through his praxis, his deployment of violence and his agenda for liberation' (*Wretched* 21).

Fanon has already argued that colonialism erases the native's soul, self and identity. Any praxis or performance that enables and empowers

the colonized to retrieve a self, or agency, must be therefore treated as positive. That this praxis/performance is violence is unfortunate, but one which finds its origins in the colonial system itself: it is the violent oppression by the white man that turns the black into a violent person.

When the colonized takes to violence, he finds it liberating, irrespective of the goal or consequence of his actions. In Keneally's *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*, the acts of barbaric killing are, Jimmy understands, inhuman. But then Jimmy does not see his violence as world-directed. It is 'intrinsic' because the very act of violence helps him see him-self, find him-self. The violence takes its toll on the world, but ultimately, it is not of or about the world: it is about Jimmy's self.

That violence is not an end in itself, but directed at something more is evidenced in statements Fanon makes throughout his writings. Thus in *Dying Colonialism* he writes:

> Because we want a democratic and renovated Algeria, because we believe one cannot rise and liberate oneself in one area and sink in another, we condemn with pain in our hearts, those brothers who have flung themselves into revolutionary action with the almost physiological brutality that centuries of oppression give rise to and feed. (25)

'Hatred', Fanon declares elsewhere, is 'not an agenda' *(Wretched* 89). But if hatred and violence are to be the basis for a whole new politics, how is a humanist politics and humanism to emerge from such a condition of conflict and strife? This question has been at the forefront of considerable Fanon scholarship.

Self-realization and cultural realization are dependent upon each other, in Fanon's view. Colonization destroys a community, a culture and the individual. It erases the self, denies agency and annihilates a tradition. The violence of decolonization, Fanon suggests, retrieves precisely this annihilated cultural tradition as well as a sense of the self through agential violence. In other words, for Fanon both individual and cultural-communitarian selfhood can be retrieved through absolute violence.

The individual acting out his violence, the violent dances of the colonized and the community's cultural nationalism are all to be treated, in Fanon, as agential. The 'actional' man with a 'respect for the basic values that constitute a human world' (*Black Skin* 173) is the starting point for a new humanism. Fanon rejects the individualist humanism of the Western world for the collectivism of African and Asian cultures. The formerly colonized individual who has now found a new subjectivity, and the nation itself finds a new destiny, and a 'collective history' (*Wretched* 51). Sometimes, of course, this retrieval of a collective history, a return to one's cultures and the self-enlightenment demanded of the formerly

colonized is itself a violent act. We see a particularly horrific example of this form of decolonization in Wole Soyinka's *Death and King's Horseman.*

Olunde, the King's horseman, Elesin's son, has been educated in the West and has therefore become some sort of cultural renegade. Elesin himself had abandoned his vocation, and backed out of the traditional suicide ritual he is supposed to perform (kill himself). Olunde now seeks reparation, from himself. When Elesin refuses to commit ritual suicide, Olunde is the one who seeks to restore the pride of his culture and family, and thus kills himself. The praise-singer, sitting beside the body and an Elesin racked with grief, says to him:

> There lies the honour of your household and of our race. Because he could not bear to let honour fly out of doors, he stopped it with his life. The son has proved the father, Elesin, and there is nothing left in your mouth to gnash but infant gums. (1984: 218)

Decolonization, which involves a return to cultural roots and belief systems, is here violent. It marks a collective pride in its heritage, even when purchased at the cost of one's life. This sacrifice, the praise-singer suggests, is the marker of a new subjectivity of the race/tribe/community because it gives the individual a sense of identity. This sense of identity is rooted in his culture and community.

Fanon treats the new subjectivity of the individual (manifest in Olunde's death, and the praise-singer's evaluation of it as an act that redeems the community's pride itself within the tribe/group) within a collective context of consciousness and political awareness. The liberated individual is not 'an island'. In Fanon's formulation, 'the violence of the colonized ... unifies the people' (*Wretched* 51). For Fanon the brutal conditions of colonialism necessitate a new humanism. When colonialism is overthrown what is also rejected is the Eurocentric humanism (a humanism characterized by paternalistic benevolence, tolerance and identity politics which gives no agency to the 'less-than-human' black). It urges the thus-far 'subhuman' black to acquire Western humanity, argues Fanon (*Wretched* 110). Fanon here rejects Western/European humanism treating it as complicit with racism and colonialism (Young 1990: 122).

In other words, what Fanon proposes is that violence results in agency, and agency is central to the imagination of a different social order and the construction of a new politics itself.

Decolonizing violence liberates both the individual and the society, and this is precisely why violence becomes the preliminary moment of a new humanism. It marks a rupture in colonial and colonizing ways of thinking, behavior and human relations. Decolonization is therefore the rejection of Western humanism as well as Western colonialism. A formerly colonized individual and society who/that has liberated him-/itself will redefine thinking, behavior and human relations. This view of violence as

transformational preliminary to the making of a new social order is given to us very early in the essay on violence when Fanon writes:

> It [decolonization] infuses a new rhythm, specific to a new generation of men, with a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is truly the creation of new men. (*Wretched* 3)

Here Fanon sees the possibility of decolonization within restitutive violence because this violence leads to a sense of the self. Fanon argues that the dialectic of colonialism (master-slave, white-black, superior-inferior) generates the black identity: the black man is made aware that he is just *black*. That is, during colonialism, a black man was only seen in relation to the white man, and that too as a negative, or a lack: 'not-white'. As Fanon puts it 'it is not I who make a meaning for myself, but it is the meaning that was already there, pre-existing, waiting for me' (*Black Skin* 102). Now the black wishes to generate a meaning for himself, as himself, and not in relation to the white man. The black man needs an identity in his own right, as himself, not in comparison or in contrast with the white man (here Fanon is disputing Sartre's famous claim that 'negritude appears as the minor term of a dialectical progression' (qtd. in Fanon, *Black Skin* 101). He frees himself of the white-black dialectic. Black self-consciousness in this second stage is (i) identical with itself (ii) does not seek a dialectic or external validation, coming to it through a confrontation with violence and (iii) is always a racial consciousness: of being not only a self, but a black self. Self-consciousness, in other words, is race or black consciousness: negritude. Once the black individual situates himself within the collective, or racial, identity, it ensures a return to black culture – the third step in the negritude process. Black consciousness here is at once individual and collective. To accept negritude is to be within a racial group identity as well. Once self-consciousness has emerged it results in a national consciousness, and national consciousness is a key component of decolonization because it rejects the colonial's culture and seeks to return to a local, native one.

Decolonization thus requires, and produces a (violent) evacuation of European ideas and beliefs. Fanon was clear that decolonization was possible only when the formerly colonized truly abandoned European ways of thinking. Fanon argues that 'for many among us [colonized] the European model is the most inspiring' (*Wretched* 236), and we thus remain intellectually colonized as well. This argument is borne out by the continual economic imperialism and Western models of 'development' that are imposed (through the nefarious Structural Adjustment Programs, trade embargoes and organizations such as the WTO) on formerly colonized nations. Writing from Egypt Nawal El Saadawi notes, for instance:

> Development... is visualized as a process of cultural change, of modernization along the lines of Western life, of technological advance which would permit better utilization of resources. (1980: i-ii)

Decolonization therefore is greater than anti-colonial struggles. Fanon writes: 'let us decide not to imitate Europe; let us combine our muscles and our brains in a new direction' (*Wretched* 236). 'Muscles and brains', indicating both physical action and intellectual activity, are both equally important to free the formerly colonized fully from the clutches of the European.

For Fanon the Western model of humanism where the white man was the measure of all things was not the ideal. Fanon writes in 'Racism and Culture: 'universality resides in this decision to recognise and accept the reciprocal relativism of different cultures, once the colonial status is irreversibly excluded' (*African* 44). The decolonized 'new man' will recognize and respect difference. We see Fanon here already moving towards a form of universality, of mutual recognition that would, in his view, produce a new humanism. The liberated human recognizes difference because he has just achieved, through a violent assertion of the self, the recognition of/for his own difference: I am not white, but black, I am not a thing but a man. It is in this transformational power of violence – which creates new subjectivities sensitive to suffering and difference that Fanon detects the chances of a new humanism.

For Fanon violence leads to what Sidi Omar has termed 'psychic redemption' (2009: 270). Parallels have been drawn between Fanon's emphasis on such redemptive violence and African American writer-activist Richard Wright's views on the same, (see Wilmot 2009). Yet it is not the psychic redemption of an individual that Fanon is interested in, but a cultural redemption and therefore a new humanity that has recovered from the debilitating effects of colonialism. Violence that results from colonial domination thus becomes a mode of retrieval of the self. It is from this retrieved self – individual as well as collective – that Fanon hopes a new humanism might emerge.

In the late 20th century arguments over Human Rights, especially in the Western world, have presupposed an autonomous, self-willed individual, able to act as a free agent (Ignatieff 2001, Slaughter 2007). If Human Rights are based on this condition of possessing agency, then a preliminary step would be to ensure conditions in which such an agent would emerge. As we have seen, Fanon sees the colonial condition as one in which the native individual is simply wiped out, without culture or consciousness. Such an individual is not a full 'person', but rather a passive subject with no sense of self. For an individual to become truly aware of his self, he needs to escape the colonial condition. He has to be aware of his self so that he can choose his life hereafter, pursue a plot of his life. Freedom is this freedom to choose, and is based on the awareness of the self.

Fanon suggests that the colonized becomes a free agent through these acts of restitutive violence. He writes in *Black Skin*: 'Self-consciousness

accepts the risk of its life, and consequently it threatens the other in his physical being' (169). Violence as a means of (re)discovery of the self – hence 'restitutive' – and therefore the emergence of the autonomous individual (free of structures like colonialism) is an anterior moment to the rise of the subject of Human Rights itself. Additionally, it is a new humanism in Fanon's utopian vision. Restitutive violence marks, therefore, the making of the subject from which a new humanism is possible. Fanon therefore, I suggest, sees a new universal, more inclusive humanism emerging only from a state of conflict between the annihilatory violence of the colonial system and the restitutive violence of the self-making, anti-colonial struggle.

Fanon's humanism is a result of both colonialism and the anti-colonial struggle, between annihilatory and restitutive violence. Where the former seeks to destroy the dignity and self-hood of the colonized, the latter retrieves it. With violent decolonization comes the awareness that human dignity is beyond racial and national identity. While Fanon seems to acknowledge the tensions involved in being grounded in a particularism (of local history, struggles and everyday life) on seeking a universalism (of human dignity), it is this testing of the impossible that constitutes his humanism. Fanon is located at the 'tension between cultural nationalism and transnationality, without "resolving" the contradiction and without yielding an attachment to the one or the aspiration to the other', as Benita Parry succinctly puts it (1994: 186-7). But, it is precisely this tension that helps think through the postcolonial predicament between a xenophobic cultural nativism and an assimilationist globalism, between conservative humanisms inherited from the colonial era and the quest for a 'new humanism' that Fanon wants. Clearly, Fanon sees the emancipated postcolonial as carrying the burden, and embodying the potential, of this new humanism.

Notes

1. Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collective feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves an indelible mark upon their group consciousness (Alexander 2004: 1). It is a loss of identity for an entire community.Fanon assumes, however, that anti-colonial resistance is only through violence. But there were, as James Scott's study (1985) shows, other 'weapons of the weak': pilferage, pretended ignorance, slander, indolence, etc.

Works Cited

Achebe, Chinua. 1964. *Arrow of God.* London: Heinemann, 1977. Print.

Ahluwalia, Pal. 'Fanon's Nausea: the Hegemony of the White Nation', *Social Identities* 9.3 (2003): 341-356. Print.

Aidoo, Ama Ata. Anowa. 1970. *Postcolonial Plays*. Ed. Hellen Gilbert. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. Print.

Alexander, Jeffrey C. 'Towards a Theory of Cultural Trauma'. *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*.Eds. Jeffrey C.et al. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. Print.

Arendt, Hannah. *On Violence*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, Inc., 1970. Print.

Armstrong, Jeanette. 'This is a Story'. 1993. *The Arnold Anthology of Post-colonial Literatures in English*. Ed. John Thieme. London: Arnold, 1996. Print.

Bulhan, H.A. *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression*. New York: Plenum Press, 1985. Print.

Crane, Ralph J. 'Out of the Center: Thoughts on the Post-colonial Literatures of Australia and New Zealand'. *Postcolonial Discourses: An Anthology*. Ed. Gregory Castle. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001. Print.

Dangarembga, Tsitsi. *Nervous Conditions*. London: The Women's Press, 1988.Print.

El Saadawi, Nawal. *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*. Tr. and Ed., S. Hetata. London: Zed, 1980. Print.

Fanon, Frantz. 1956. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Tr. Charles Lam Markmann. London: Pluto, 2008. Print. (Abbreviated as *Black Skin*). Print.

_____. 1961. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Tr. Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press, 2004. Print. (Abbreviated as *Wretched*). Print.

_____. 1967. *Towards the African Revolution*. Tr. Haakon Chevalier. New York: Grove, Print. (Abbreviated as *African*). Print.

_____. 1965. *A Dying Colonialism*. Tr. Haakon Chevalier. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970. Print. (Abbreviated as Dying). Print.

Farah, Nuruddin. *Maps*. New York: Arcade, 1999. Print.

Gauch, Suzanne. 'Fanon on the Surface'. *Parallax* 8.2 (2002): 116-128. Print.

Gordon, Lewis R. *Fanon and the Crisis of the European Man: An Essay on Philosophy and the Human Sciences*. New York: Routledge, 1995. Print.

_____. 'Through the Zone of Nonbeing: A Reading of *Black Skin, White Masks* in Celebration of Fanon's Eightieth Birthday', *Worlds & Knowledges Otherwise*. 2006. Web. http://www.jhfc.duke.edu/wko/dossiers/1.3/LGordon.pdf. 10 May 2010.

Ignatieff, Michael. *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry*. Ed. Amy Guttman. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. Print.

Kawash, Samira. 'Terrorists and Vampires: Fanon's Spectral Violence of Decolonization'. *Frantz Fanon: Critical Perspectives* . Ed.A.C. Alessandrini. London and New York: Routledge, 1999. Print.

Keneally, Thomas. *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*. Victoria: Penguin, 1973. Print.

Mudimbe, VY. *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988. Print.

Naipaul, VS. *The Enigma of Arrival*. London: Viking, 1987. Print.

_____. 1962. *The Middle Passage*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969. Print.

Nandy, Ashis. *Traditions, Tyranny, and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992. Print.

Nayar, Pramod K. 'Frantz Fanon: Towards a Postcolonial Humanism', *IUP Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 3.1 (2011): 21-35. Print..

Ngugi wa Thiong'O. *The River Between*. London: Heinemann, 1965. Print.

Omar, Sidi M. 'Fanon in Algeria: A Case of Horizontal (Post)-colonial Encounter?' *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 7.3 (2009): 264-278. Print.

Parry, Benita. 'Resistance Theory/Theorizing Resistance or Two Cheers for Nativism'. *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*. Eds.Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994. Print.

Prabhu, Anjali. 'Narration in Frantz Fanon's *Peau noire masques blancs: Some Reconsiderations*'. *Research in African Literatures* 37.4 (2006): 189-210. Print.

Roberts, N. 'Fanon, Sartre, Violence, and Freedom'. *Sartre Studies International*, 10.2 (2004): 139-160. Print.

Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight's Children*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1982. Print.

Scott, James C. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985. Print.

Sekyi-Otu, Ato. *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996. Print.

Serequeberhan, Tsenay. *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.

Seshadri-Crooks, Kalpana. "I am a Master": Terrorism, Masculinity, and Political Violence in Frantz Fanon'. *Parallax* 8.2 (2002): 84-98. Print.

Slaughter, Joseph R. *Human Rights, Inc.: The World Novel, Narrative Form and International Law*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2007. Print.

Soyinka, Wole. *Death and the King's Horseman*. Soyinka,*Six Plays*. 1975. London: Methuen, 1984. Print.

_____. *The Open Sore of a Continent: A Personal Narrative of the Nigerian Crisis*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. Print.

Taylor, Charles. 'The Politics of Recognition'. *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader*. Ed. Lawrence Theo Goldberg. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994. Print.

Walcott, Derek. *Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970. Print.

Wilmot, Patrick. 'The Role of Violence in the Works of Wright and Fanon'. *The Black Scholar*, 39.1-2 (2009): 17-22. Print.

Young, Robert. *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*. London: Routledge, 1990. Print.

CREATING THE NEW WOMAN: SUKHALATA AND OTHERS

Jayeeta Bagchi

'The nineteenth century could well be called an age of women, for all over the world their rights and wrongs, their 'nature', capacities and potential were the subjects of heated discussion'(Kumar 7). This was also true for Bengal. The social reform movements which ushered in 'modernity' were to a large extent centred on issues related to women.

The urban Bengali *bhadralok*s[1] in the nineteenth century became the undisputed leaders of social reformation. Penetration of western ideas among them made it necessary for them to review the notions of 'tradition' and define the concept of 'modernity'. Generally 'tradition' signified whatever was pre-colonial and 'common', not merely unchanging but also unchangeable while 'modernity' was essentially dynamic. However 'modernity' was a term fraught with a lot of tensions and debates. Whoever mattered or even those who did not, tried to define 'modern' in their own terms.

Bhadralok's agenda

Education, especially women's education, became the fulcrum around which the 'modern' Indian women's identity was created. The bhadrolok's agenda was to create a wife companionate partly based on the Victorian notion and partly necessitated by the desire to measure up to the Western standards of a worthy 'civilized' nation. The concept of 'women's condition' in the colonial period stood for the whole notion of the plight of the Indians. Because of this synecdoche, 'women's question' became a part of the nationalist agenda in India, more specifically in Bengal.

To a large extent, the Brahmos spearheaded educational reforms for women along with cultural-social reforms through a series of ruptures, initially from the Bengalee Hindu elite conservative society. Brahmo Samaj[2] is synonymous with a variety of reforms. Women's upliftment was the declared agenda of the Brahmo Samaj, and its schisms were required to justify its agenda. One needs to mention in passing that two major legal interventions in Acts or Bills supported or even brought forward by the Brahmos before the turn of the century were the Special Marriage Act (1872) and the Age of Consent Act (1891). These Acts, especially the latter one, actually meant that girls in the community would not marry very young which prompted and ensured schooling before marriage.

Education for the Brahmos did not mean merely literacy. Education was intended to turn the traditional woman into an accomplished urban literate woman who would socially participate in refined discussions with

their husbands as well as exhibit cultural refinement at home and maintain the hearth peacefully[3]. By the middle of the century (1849) the first school was set up in Calcutta for 'respectable' Hindu girls by John Drinkwater Bethune. This school was patronized chiefly by the Brahmos. It still continues to be one of the premier girls' institutions in Kolkata. The first women's organization in 1865 was set up by the Brahmos where sewing was taught, religious advices were given and women discussed social issues. By 1883 Bethune School produced the first two graduates of the entire British Empire – Kadambini Ganguly (1861/2 – 1923) and Chandramukhi Bose (1860 – 1944). Kadambini, a Brahmo, studied medicine and achieved a successful medical practice in Calcutta while Chandramukhi, a Christian, went on to become the first woman Principal of the Bethune College. Kadambini, however, was denied pass marks in the medical final examination because the examiner did not believe in women's professionalism. She went to England to get her degree.

I would like to limit my essay to the Brahmo Samaj because it was they who theoretically nourished and gave shape to the concept of the 'new woman'.

In all the reminiscences about her, Kadambini is referred to as not simply a successful professional but an angel of the house. Punyalata and Sukhalata, her granddaughters, remember how their grandmother decorated the house with various *objet d'art* collected from abroad. While she went to visit her patients she wove laces so as not to pass her time idly. There was no doubt that she never neglected her role within the house. She also attended religious meetings of the Brahmo Samaj regularly and became the first woman to speak from the Congress platform in 1889. She was, what I would like to call, the first generation of 'new woman'. This was the image of the ideal woman created sometime in the 1890s –one who happily married the private with the public.

The discursive terrain before the arrival of the new women

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay wrote his famous essay 'Prachina ebong Nabina' in *Bangadarshana* in 1874 (*Baisakh* 1281) where he with all his skepticism laid down the foundations of the *nabina* ('new woman') and the *prachina* ('traditional') as discursive categories. This essay came out in a collection called *Prabandha Pustak* in 27 April and then became a one of the essays in *Bibidha Prabandha* (part I) in 1887.

The essential quality which distinguished *prachina* from the *nabina* was women's education (*strisiksha*) he explained. 'New woman' or the *nabina* was essentially cultured and polished in her behaviour. Bankim vehemently criticised the western educated *bhadralok*'s agenda to turn Panchi, Rami, Madhabi into foreign memsahibs. He writes that in his bid to do so the *Babu* was turning the traditional common working woman into a lazy, elite, superfluous woman, devoid of religious piety and healthy lifestyle.

Bankim had written a long essay entitled 'Babu' where he critiqued the decadent absentee landlords and the rising middle class. *Babu*, with its negative connotation, is pitted against the *Bhadralok* .

It is interesting to note here Bankim's fear of social mobility of women in society. 'New women' belonged fundamentally to elite middle class (*abhijata bhadralok*) as against the common working women. Bankim was not a Brahmo, and he strongly rejected the Brahmo urban cultural pretensions. To say that Panchi, Rami, etc. would become lazy is actually again a *bhadralok*'s legitimate fear of the transgressive *chhotolok* (lower class). However he did hit the hammer on the proper nail. It *was* a bhadralok's agenda and it *was* education which actually defined the 'new woman'. Later, twentieth century theoreticians like Partha Chatterjee depended heavily on Bankim's categorization, though *nabina* was replaced by 'the new woman' or *nabya nari* to show the shift in position. He says that the 'new woman' was created against the 'common woman' by the logic of reversal. The 'new woman' was what the 'common' woman was not. While the 'common woman' was 'coarse, vulgar, loud, quarrelsome, devoid of superior moral sense, sexually promiscuous, subjected to brutal physical oppression by males', the 'new woman' was refined, soft, decent and prude. Meredith Borthwick uses the term *bhadramahila* as a companion to *bhadralok*. So women through the process of *stree siksha* would become the *bhadramahila*, with her special attribute being *bhadra* or cultured.

By the *fin de siècle* the concept of the 'new woman' had crystallized and the second or even third generations of 'new women' were born.

The new women

With their distinctive cultural attainment the 'new women' embarked on creating and re-creating a new social role. I use the term re-create cautiously because women were not using it. In fact it is true that in early twentieth century the issue of women's education vanished (or was rather banished?) from public debate. The debate on women's education got overlaid by more important issues of militant nationalism where the rhetoric was often too male to admit women. (That is not to say that women played no part in militant nationalism). According to Chatterjee, it happened due to the resolution of the woman's question by the turn of the century. But the question arises as to whose question was it actually? The *bhadralok*'s agenda was accomplished. But so far as women were concerned the question was just being posed.

Many 'new women' would eventually become educationists in the twentieth century Bengal formally or otherwise. Women like Sarala Ray (1861-1946), Abala Bose (1864 -1951), Sarala Debi Chaudhurani (1872 - 1946) and others were directly associated with formal academic institutions. But I would like to bring attention to those women who were not directly related to academic institutions. Indira Debi Chaudhurani(1873 -1960),

Tagore's niece, wrote and spoke on women's education extensively. She clearly mentions in one of her articles that she was never formally part of an academic institution, yet it is her education and age that as if almost give her the right to speak and judge the condition of women's education in Bengal. Unfortunately, all these women are seen as housewives and amateur educationists. Indira Debi takes up Bankim's 'Prachina ebong Nabina' point by point without mentioning it to put forward her counter argument in favour of the 'new woman'. The essay called 'Bartaman Stree Siksha Bichar', which became a part of *Narir Ukti* in 1958 (Poush 1365), was written by her in 1912 (Sravan 1319). She states that women's education has been happening for the last fifty years and higher education for twenty-five years. She argues that whatever women have been accused of vices, namely lack of religiosity, arrogance, incapability of carrying out housework, lack of health, desire for luxury, selfishness and affinity towards western ways of life can happen only when one is not educated or half educated. Good, proper education would ensure that women can overcome this and achieve much more. So she turns the table against the coarse, rural traditional Indian woman.

Sukhalata Rao

This generation of 'new women' would take up women's education in their hands whether they were involved with formal institutions or not. Sukhalata Rao (1886-1969) was one such example whose mission was to re-create the next generations of women in the image of the 'new woman'. Sukhalata was a second generation 'new woman'. Sukhalata's mother, Bidhumukhi, was almost the same age as Kadambini Ganguly. However Kadambini Ganguly was married to Bidhumukhi's father and therefore Kadambini was by relation Sukhlata's grandmother. Kadambini's children were Sukhalata's peer group and they grew up together in the same house.

Born on October 26, 1886 Sukhalata was the eldest of the six children of the versatile genius Upendrakishore Roy Chowdhury (1863 -1915) and his wife Bidhumukhi Debi. Sukhalata developed a very shy, reserved and quiet personality – a stark contrast to her genius brother, Sukumar Ray, who was younger to her by more than a year, mischievous, humourous and an unquestionable leader of the peer group of their huge family and community circle. The difference was also no doubt socially engendered and encouraged. She acquired all those refined skills, like painting, needlework, household decorations and good cooking, as expected of an elegant educated urbane Brahmo woman. Brought up in a highly intellectual atmosphere, she was encouraged to write and paint from her childhood. She began writing for the famous journals of the early twentieth century like *Probasi, Modern Review, Mukul*, etc. and also for the family magazine *Sandesh*. Unlike her younger sister, Punyalata Chakraborty (1890-1974), who despite her writing skills confined herself mainly to the family

magazine, Sukhalata went on to write profusely for various popular magazines of the period and also came up with books. Apart from her family, she was encouraged by Rabindranath Tagore who wrote an introduction to one of her books – *Behula: an Indian Myth* – the only book which had watercolour plates painted by her. Her marriage, in 1907, to Dr. Jayanto Rao, the eldest son of the Oriya littérateur Madhusudan Rao, (1853 – 1912), helped maintain her skills and religious conviction.

In an essay entitled 'Adarsha Nari' (Ideal Woman) written in 1931 (Jyaishtha 1338) in *Bangalakshmi*, she defines the ideal woman's mission as working ardently for the education and emancipation of women, protest against child marriage etc. In her view Dr. Alice Solomon was the ideal woman to be emulated. While women should intervene in the public sphere they would have to be the angel protectors of the hearth at the same time. Dr Solomon's Academy of Social Work is praised by her because it educates women towards upbringing of children, cooking food, housekeeping etc. She mentions Sarojnalini as Alice's Indian counterpart who through her social work was educating women in the same lines.

The same year and in the same magazine, Nirojbasini Som wrote in a review of the condition of women's education in Bengal titled 'Bangladeshe Strisiskshar Bartaman Abasthar Sankshipta Bibaran'(A Short Description of the Condition of Women's Education in present Bangladesh). In this review she said that "women are now especially aware of their daughter's education" (*Bangalakshmi* 1931, Sravana 1338). I would like to point out that Nirojbasini no more thinks of women's education as the father's duty towards the daughter, leave alone husband's towards the wife. While the world of the twentieth century Bangla fiction is replete with instances of the husband's duty of teaching their brides, the women narrate a different story.

The mission to educate to help create more new women thus becomes a part of the new woman's agenda now. Sukhalata's maternal aunt and contemporary Jyotirmoyee Gangopadhyay (1889 -1945) remained unmarried to fulfill her life as a teacher in formal schools. Sarala Debi Chaudhurani, Tagore's niece, remained unmarried for a long time until she was assured that she could continue with her mission to educate after marriage. It is women's public role which they took up on their own volition that I believe made them slowly invisible in the stormy debates that characterized the nineteenth century *bhadraloks*.

Sukhalata wrote as many as seven primers in trying to improve the method of teaching with each successive book. In all probability the first book, *Porashuna*, came out in 1917. Two of her books are still widely used by various schools. Some of her primers have been the government prescribed texts for primary schools and have also been awarded by the Indian government, thereby acknowledging their importance. *Nije Poro*

got first prize for good production from the Indian Government in 1956 and the State award in 1958. *Khelar Pora* got special mention for good production from the Indian Government in1971.

Sukhalata wrote Bangla, English and Oriya primers which, I believe, indicate the ways in which she was negotiating various cultural spheres. A reviewer of one of her primers pointed out in 1917, 'Women are the suitable candidates to teach children...men can never do it that way...[I]n this book the teaching method which the woman writer has suggested is not only unique but also has made it simple and practicable'. Along with teaching the basics of alphabet she wrote a book called *Sasthyo* (health) for primary school children in 1922. Today this book would have been part of lifestyle curriculum. Her interest in pedagogy originated from her desire to create future generations of women in the image of the modern urban Indian woman. She went on to give didactic speeches in many august assemblies and write articles in various magazines.

The categories of urban, modern, Indian were newly straightening out in about the early twentieth century. Just as Sukhalata's father and uncles belonged to the first generation of urban settled *bhadralok* in the family, Sukhalata and her siblings, cut off from their rural link, were urbane to the core. As Indian nationhood was emerging with the consolidation of the idea of the Indian, the identity of the 'new women' was taking shape within its culturally defined boundary.

We can happily say that by the middle of the twentieth century the 'new woman' had arrived in the urban middle class milieu and became 'commonly' visible in urban Calcutta.

Notes

1. The term *bhadralok* was widely in use since the nineteenth century for urban middleclass men working in the service sectors under the British Raj. It referred broadly to all those who did not belong to the *hoi polloi*.
2. Brahmo Samaj was founded by Rammohun Roy in 1828. It went through a series of schisms and was later known as the Adi Brahmo Samaj. The first schism gave rise to the Nababidhan Brahmo Samaj founded by Keshub Chandra Sen in 1864. Subsequently, the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj was founded by a radical faction of the Samaj in 1878.
3. There were other pro-education voices which talked about the same curriculum for men and women. However other ideas of education was silenced or overridden by this stronger voice.

Works Cited

Bagchi, Jayeeta, ed. *Selected Works of Sukhalata Rao, Volume I*. Calcutta: Thema. 1999. Print.

Borthwick, Meredith. *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal 1849-1905.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984Print.

Chatterjee, Partha. *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Post Colonial Histories. The Partha Chatterjee Omnibus.* New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1999. Print.

Kumar, Radha. *The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and feminism in India 1800 -1990.* New Delhi: Zubaan, 1993. Print.

Sastri, Sivanath. *History of the Brahmo Samaj.* Calcutta: Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1993. Print.

Srivastava, Gauri. *Women's Higher Education in the 19th Century.* New Delhi: Concept Publishing. 2000. Print.

■■

NATURE, WOMAN AND MADNESS IN THE CARRIBEAN ISLAND: READING JEAN RHYS' *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*

Aloka Patel

While most of her writings are about the alienation of the dispossessed woman, Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a probable answer to the mystery of the mad Creole woman in the attic in Charlotte Bronte's classic novel *Jane Eyre* (1847). Rhys' novel gives a voice to Bertha, Rochester's first wife in *Jane Eyre*, who is now named Antoinette, to narrate the circumstances in which she gets married and goes mad. Rhys describes the natural environment of the Caribbean island. At the same time her novel gives us a picture of the nineteenth century post-emancipation period in Jamaica, in which Antoinette grows up. This period was characterized by cataclysmic social changes that resulted in the end of slave economy, the rise of a class of impoverished slave-owning Creole community and the emergence of 'new' colonizers on the socio-economic scene who appropriated the prerogatives of the earlier colonists, although masking their greed by dubious moral claims of being more sympathetic towards the black community and, therefore, judgmental about the sexual morality of the white creoles.

The white Creole woman, in the post emancipation period became liminal, having suffered double marginalization. Unsurprisingly, her representation in the public culture involved pathologization of the psychosexuality of the Creole female which could not possibly be explained in terms of the dominant categories of reason and truth. In consequence, the pathologized was to be occluded from the structures of knowledge and regarded as "mysterious."

Wide Sargasso Sea (1966) foregrounds such a mysterious female figure, unsettling the representation of women as "mysterious" in the gothic tradition in which Bronte was working. Rhys explores the mystery of the mad woman in the attic by lending this liminal female figure a voice and questioning the dominant imperial European patriarchal of ideologies as represented by Rochester in *Jane Eyre*.

This paper will deal with the central character of Antoinette and explore the causes and the effects of the pathologization of white Creole women, who did not conform to European ideological system, as mad. This paper will focus on Antoinette's representation of herself as against that of Rochester largely in terms of nature versus culture binary. In this context I shall take an eco-feminist perspective to explain the politics of Antoinette's resistance to the discourse of reason and power controlled by 'new' colonists. The paper has been divided into three parts. Taking an

eco-feminist perspective, the first part deals with Antoinette's representation of herself as part of the natural environment of the Caribbean islands. The second part largely focuses on Rochester's self-validating perception as a nineteenth-century English gentleman of culture and reason vis-à-vis the white Creole woman of uncontained sexuality and unreason. In the third part I shall discuss how Antoinette's madness becomes the condition for unraveling the hypocrisies and contradictions within the dominant white male sexual norms and standards of normalcy, and serves as a force of resistance.

I

Drawing out parallels in her narrative between women and nature in Jamaica, Rhys shows how the nature/culture dualism and the dominant male ideological system saw both women and nature as related to each other and, therefore, vulnerable to exploitation and oppression. Ecofeminist, Chaone Mallory notes: "there are important conceptual connection between the oppression of women and the domination of nature" (256). The European pastoral tradition is replete with examples of how women and nature have both been passive objects to be conquered, subdued and possessed. In contemporary times eco-feminists have politicized the nature-woman trope. Karen Warren, in her book *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What Is and Why it Matters* (2000), asserts that woman and nature are symbolically and linguistically linked in Western literatures... men use adjectives to describe nature as 'Mother Nature', 'Virgin Timber', and 'Fertile Soil'... and phrases like 'Raping the Land'; 'Taming the Nature...'" Rhys gives evidence of how the white women too had internalized such conceptions of themselves as closer to nature and like early explorers of the island conceived of it as untainted paradise. Not only is Antoinette compared to Jamaica but Antoinette's family estate, Coulibri where she spent her childhood is given to us as an idyllic Garden of Eden:

> Our garden was large and beautiful as that garden in the Bible—the tree of life grew there. But it had gone wild. The paths were overgrown and a smell of dead flowers mixed with the fresh living smell.... Orchids flourished out of reach.... Twice a year octopus orchid flowered... It was a bell-shaped mass of white, mauve, deep purples, wonderful to see. The scent was very sweet and strong, I never went near it. (6)

The initial description of Coulibri garden with the tantalizing smell of flowers is reminiscent of early description of the islands by explorers who found the islands both sensuous and exotic as well as wild and untamed, hence, in need of 'repair' or 'taming'. Annette Kolodny's views regarding such an approach towards a foreign landscape as an "abstraction of the essential femininity of the terrain," can be taken into account in

order to understand the polarized views of the colonizers: "the repeated evocation of the new continent as 'some delicate garden abounding with all kinds of odoriferous flowers'... tantalizes with the suggestion that the garden may in fact be 'an abstraction of the essential femininity of the terrain" (5). But this impulse to equate the land with a delicate garden also has, as Kolodny goes on to state, "[a] radically different facet: this paradise really existed.... Eden, Paradise, the Golden Age, and the idyllic garden, in short, all the backdrops for European literary pastoral... Promising material ease without labor or hardship..." (5-6).

The island is perceived as a paradise but is also simultaneously viewed as wild and mysterious: "All Coulibri estate had gone wild like the garden gone to bush" (6). But, for the Black Caribbeans "gone to bush" is the colloquial way of saying "to get married." Antoinette, having been brought up in the island by a black nurse, Christophine, must have been well acquainted with the Black Creole tongue. In her statement about the "garden, gone to bush" she may therefore be playing around with words, ostensibly stating that the garden had indeed gone wild due their poverty after her father's death in the aftermath of the emancipation of slaves. But at the same time she might also be referring to the loss of her childhood bliss and innocence after her mother's remarriage as well as her own marriage to the new white men who came to the island to make money.

The death of Antoinette's father, Alexander Cosway, an ex-slave owner and plantation owner had left her mother Annette in a state of distress. The garden at Coulibri represents Annette's state of mind after her husband's death. With no money or friends, an invalid son, a young daughter, and hostile black servants, who in spite of the emancipation felt compelled to stay on in the estate. Annette was left with no choice but to marry Mr. Mason, an Englishman. If her decision to marry Mr. Mason was a conscious choice to improve her social and financial position after one day discovering her daughter shabbily dressed in a slave girl's clothes; Mr. Mason's marriage to Annette is also not altogether innocent of selfish reasons. Like many other new colonizers to the island, he had come to the island to take advantage of the slump in the sugar market, and to make money from the post-emancipation misfortunes of the previous white colonizers. During the wedding ceremony Antoinette overhears a woman saying: "He didn't come to the West Indies to dance—he came to make money as they all do. Some of the big estates are going cheap, and one unfortunate's loss is always a clever man's gain. No, the whole thing is a mystery" (14).

After Mr. Mason comes to live in Coulibri, life changes for Antoinette and Annette. They are prosperous once again. Antoinette describes the changed Coulibri which is no more "wild" and "overgrown": "Coulibri looked the same when I saw it again, although it was clean and tidy, no grass between the flagstones, no leaks" (14).The garden had been

restructured into a well-planned garden to match the 'civilized' condition in which they now lived.

Antoinette, in describing her garden "as that garden in the Bible", evokes the primal land of Eden whose innocence is violated by the arrival of the new colonizers. But this garden too, like the one in the Bible, holds the potential for evil. Antoinette remembers overhearing women gossiping after her mother's wedding, of "the six-foot snake I saw with my own eyes curled up on the privy seat last time I was here" (13). Missy Dehn Kubitschek, in her article "Charting the Empty Spaces of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*" notes "The Euro-American tradition, present in Antoinette's description of Coulibri as Eden-gone-wild, defines the snake as evil" (25).

Antoinette's opinion of the island is therefore informed by her inherited English ideals and Christian beliefs which underlie her subliminal consciousness. An evidence of the fact is her description of the pool where she goes to bathe with her childhood friend, Tia:

> I could not sleep, but I wasn't quite awake as I lay in the shade looking at the pool—deep and dark green under the trees, brown-green if it had rained, but a bright sparkling green in the sun. The water was so clear that you could see the pebbles at the bottom of the shallow part. Blue and white and striped red. Very pretty. (9)

Her dual consciousness between wakefulness and sleep is suggestive of the two worlds which Antoinette inhabits—the English and the Caribbean. While physically she basks in the cool shade of green trees of the island, her ideas and opinions are formed by British ideals symbolically revealed in the colors of the Union Jack that are used to describe the pebbles under the water. Her sense of existence on the borders of the two cultures leads to Antoinette's being forever in a state of uncertainty regarding her identity and home.

While the changes that take place in the garden are informative of the ambiguous and ambivalent identities of Antoinette and Annette, they are also suggestive of the restricted conditions under which they live. While the women lived in a kind of paradisal land in Coulibri, the coming of Mr. Mason ushered in colonial utilitarian ideals of taming and farming whatever is natural. The garden was repaired. But this repair can be perceived as 'taming' in the colonial sense. It was the beginning of exercising control strategically through marriage as an institution designed to increase physical safety, and emotional and financial security.

Antoinette's marriage to Rochester was also designed apparently to assure to her emotional security. Rochester had promised "peace, happiness, safety" (48) to the reluctant Antoinette before their wedding. In fact, the marriage which was finalized by her step-brother, Richard, was a well-laid-out plan for the mutual benefit of Richard and Rochester. In his letter

to his father, Rochester states how he benefitted financially through his marriage to Antoinette:

> Dear Father. The thirty thousand pounds have been paid to me without question or condition. No provision made for her (that must be seen to)... I have sold my soul or you have sold it, and after all is it such a bad bargain? The girl is thought to be beautiful, she is beautiful. And yet... (42)

Antoinette, a white Creole woman whose father and step-father are dead and mother gone mad, submits to the persuasions of Rochester in the hope of acceptance and security. But more than a wife, Antoinette becomes a source of financial security for Rochester. The marriage although consummated and apparently happy in the beginning takes a turn, and by force of circumstances leads to a situation where Antoinette finds herself, with her name changed to Bertha, confined to the attic in Rochester's estate in England.

II

Although the narrative of Antoinette draws our sympathy towards her, nevertheless, Rhys gives space to Rochester's perception of his own marriage to Antoinette. Allowing Rochester, with his preconceived English notions of the island and its women, and making him narrate part of the story the novel also explores Creole madness from the nineteenth century patriarchal perspective.

Rochester, like many other disinherited younger sons of English gentlemen of his times, had come to Jamaica in search of a rich heiress to take as a wife. But also like other English gentlemen of his times who had formed ideas about the island and its women from travel narratives and reports of early explorers and historians who had visited the islands, Rochester too arrives on the island with his preconceived notions about Caribbean womanhood.

Travel narratives from the islands during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries generally exoticized not only the islands but also women of the islands. In her readings on the sexuality of the Caribbean women Kamala Kempadoo notes how women, both black and white, in the islands were frequently subjected to "eroticizing" and "sexualizing" gaze by Europeans who visited the islands. Women in the islands, irrespective of the color of their skins were considered immoral and sexually promiscuous:

> John Singleton, Edward Long and J. B. Moreton, among others, explored how the system of slavery intersected with Creole gender norms and sexual proclivities to influence the development of a West Indian racial order that had far-reaching implications... John Singleton's depiction of the white West Indian is similar to that of many other eighteenth-century British authors, the majority of whom found white

> Creole women sorely lacking in the virtues and refinements associated with the metropolitan feminine ideal. (Murphy and Spear 64)

Rochester's received notion that the islands engender diseases and carnality seems to be validated as he falls sick on arriving at the island. Understandably, he is not inclined to take a Creole woman as wife. Having read books like *The Glittering Coronet of Isles* he develops contempt for the Creole misogyny and its supposed sexual and moral perversions. The racial and sexual anxiety of the European colonizing men was eloquently expressed in travel narratives of the times. A case in point is former planter Edward Long's remarks that "white West Indian women's constant intercourse from their birth with Negroe domestics' made them entirely unfit marriage partners for sensible Britons" (qtd. in Murphy and Spear 64). Similarly, "J.B. Moreton, who spent five years as a bookkeeper in Jamaica, reinforced this derogatory image of the white Creole female as a type tainted by her close association with black domestics. Too many Creole women, he claimed, 'receive their education among negroe [sic] wenches, and imbibe great part of their dialect, principles, manners, and customs' (Murphy and Spear 64).

Antoinette too had been brought up by a black nurse, Christophine, and had spent her early childhood solely among black servants and their children. She had imbibed a lot of their manners and wished to identify with them. But the European iconography, which identified Black women with nature in its wild and passionate form, also regarded Creole women as promiscuous because of their "close association with black domestics". Kempadoo discusses how the European value system distinguished between the sexualities of women of different races:

> If white womanhood represented the pinnacle of femininity, couched in assumptions of fairness, purity, frailty and domesticity, and black womanhood the total opposite because of its presumed closeness to nature, dark skin, masculine physique and unbridled sexuality, the combination of Western Europe and Africa produced notions of the 'light-skinned' woman who could almost pass for white yet retained a tinge of colour, as well as a hint of the wantonness and uninhibited sexuality of exotic cultures. (164-165)

The key statement here is "the light-skinned woman who could almost pass for white." Rochester too had doubted the English lineage of Antoinette and consequently her chastity. Reconstructing the stereotype of the lascivious woman in his description of Bertha in *Jane Eyre* he had observed "I was not sure of the existence of one virtue in her nature: I had marked neither modesty, nor benevolence, nor candor, nor refinement in her mind or manners" (323). The English law of Primogeniture which did not give the younger son the privilege to inherit his father's property had forced Rochester to compromise to circumstances and agree to the

marriage with Antoinette. It was to him a deal with the devil—a bargain where "[he] had sold his soul" (42). He had, therefore, already constructed Antoinette as the devil before his arrival at their honeymoon island Granbois, where they go to immediately after their marriage.

Granbois is a place Antoinette is "much attached to" (46), and Rochester finds it intoxicating: "Cloves I could smell and cinnamon, roses and orange blossom. An intoxicating freshness" (44). But he also hates the place: "Not only wild but menacing. Those hills would close in on you... Everything is too much... Too much blue, too much purple, too much green. The flowers too red, the mountains too high, the hills too near. And the woman is a stranger" (42).

In Leo Marx's interpretation, such a description of landscape as wild and menacing is an expression of one's desire to control and subjugate not only the natural surroundings but also the human beings who inhabit the places:

> To depict America as a hideous wilderness... is to envisage it as another field for the exercise of power... A need to mobilize energy, postpone immediate pleasures, and to rehearse the perils and purposes of the community... the unceasing manipulation and mastery of the forces of nature, including of course human nature... It is hardly surprising that the New England Puritans favoured the hideous wilderness image of the American landscape. (43)

Like the early explorers and colonizers to the West Indies, Rochester typically sees the island as wild, beautiful and mysterious, and therefore necessary to be controlled and possessed: "It was a beautiful place—wild, untouched, above all untouched, with an alien, disturbing, secret loveliness. And it kept its secret. I'd find myself thinking, 'What I see is nothing—I want what it hides—that is not nothing" (54). Rochester considers his wife as well as the landscape as his rivals. He had after all described his marriage to Antoinette in terms of a conflict of war—as "the advance and retreat" (39).

For Rochester his marriage to Antoinette was only a marriage of convenience—a compromise. Disinherited by his father and the English legal system the resulting frustration had caused in him an unconscious desire to possess and to control the very landscape where he had come to compensate for his loss at home. This desire in him for control and possession of the landscape is counter transferred to his wife with who he identifies the landscape. Rochester views Antoinette as part of the Caribbean landscape, which to his colonial sensibility seems sensuous, exotic and beautiful, and at the same time remote and mysterious. He is the dispossessed colonizer who is unable to settle his English identity with the strange Caribbean creoles, the natives, and their landscape. He doubts the English ancestry of Antoinette and in his description of the

natural landscape identifies her with the island. The description of the wilderness of Granbois and Antoinette so intermingle in Rochester's consciousness that it becomes difficult to tell the two apart, in his narrative.

> We came to a little river. 'This is the boundary of Granbois.' She smiled at me. It was the first time I had seen her smile simply and naturally... A bamboo spout jutted from the cliff, the water coming from it was silver blue. She dismounted quickly, picked a large shamrock-shaped leaf to make a cup, and drank... Looking up smiling, she might have been any pretty English girl... (42-43)

As Rochester's narrative progresses, nature, women, sexuality and madness become associated with each other. If, to Rochester, the honeymoon island, Granbois, with its "untouched" quality seems to be a dreamland with the stereotypical mysteries and secrets assigned to a virgin bride, it is also not without, as Sylvie Maurel points out in her book on Jean Rhys, "its snakes or its leviathan" (Maurel 157). If the garden at Coulibri is an Eden, it also shelters Antoinette as Eve. As suggested by the description of Coulibri as Eden—it is also in a fallen state. Granbois accordingly to Rochester is a place of unrestrained sexual fulfilment. It festers within him doubt, and he senses an evil presence. His questions to Antoinette about snakes in Granbois, and the monster crab that hides under a stone is but a manifestation of his doubts and fears. His doubts almost give way to certainty when he hears rumors about his wife and her mother and the madness running in the family from Daniel, one of the many bastard children of Alexander Cosway from a slave woman. Daniel also tells him of Antoinette's suspicious relationship with Sandi, another of her illegitimate cousins.

Daniel's stories no doubt provoke Rochester to doubt Antoinette's sanity and chastity. But his suspicions regarding her sanity are confirmed when he sees Antoinette react violently to a colored servant Amelie's abusive remarks of 'white cockroach', by tearing a bed-sheet to shreds. Rochester, however, is not unaware of Amelie's nature. He observes: "A lovely creature but sly, spiteful, malignant perhaps like much else in this place" (39). Still, this does not stop him from regarding Antoinette with doubt and perceiving her as a lunatic and Devil incarnate. He perceives her as Eve, the cause of the Fall of man:

> Sneer to the last, Devil. Do you think I don't know? She thirsts for anyone-not me... She'll loosen her black hairs and laugh and coax and flatter (a mad girl. She'll not care who she's loving). She'll moan and cry and give herself as any sane woman would-or could. Or could. Then lie still, still as this cloudy day. A lunatic who always knows the time... I tell you she loves no one, anyone. I could not touch her. Excepting as the hurricane will touch that tree-and break it. (106-107)

But even before Daniel's intrusion into their lives, Rochester, from the very first day of his arrival at Granbois had, as discussed earlier, doubted the English lineage of Antoinette.

In Granbois where "The hills would close in on you" (42) Rochester had felt alienated and isolated. He had been removed, as it were, from a 'civilized' area to a more pristine world where 'Nature' seemed to be the dominating force, and his new bride a part of that natural world. Quite appropriately Marlon Ross points out the binaries drawn out by the Western culture of which Rochester can be seen as representative:

> The tendency in Western culture is to position the female closer to nature than the male... The woman is the less developed creature created secondarily only as a helpmate... [A]s the masculine mind wields its reason to construct society and civilization, the woman stands as a constant reminder of his inescapable relationship to nature, of the base first nature that can never be fully eradicated. Whenever this base first nature is seen as creative, the female is received "positively" for sustaining the link between that nature and mankind; whenever this base first nature is seen as a threat, however, the woman is viewed "negatively" as a creature who lures man away from the progress of mind and civilization. (401)

Rochester had in fact never been in love either with Granbois or with Antoinette. His elemental passions were a manifestation of his colonial and patriarchal desire to possess both, the land as well as the woman. It is only much later that he gives full expression to his hatred:

> I hated this place. I hated the mountains and hills, the rivers and rain. I hated the sunsets of whatever colour, I hated its beauty and its magic and the secret I would never know. I hated this indifference and the cruelty which was part of its loveliness. Above all I hated her. For she belonged to the magic and loveliness. (111)

Having already identified Antoinette with the land, Rochester's consciousness perceives the wilderness of the island, black female sexuality, and Antoinette to be covalent. He recounts his feelings in one instance: "Perhaps they were related, I thought. Its possible, its even probable in this damned place" (81).

III

Deprived of her father and mother respectively by death and insanity, and victim of mercenary designs of her step-father and brother, Antoinette had been forced to marry a stranger. Her only friends Tia, in childhood, and Christophine, after her marriage to Rochester, had abandoned her.

Antoinette's hysterics and schizophrenia are an important aspect of the psychic and cultural violence the Creole woman is made to suffer under colonialism. Ironically, as the novel highlights, the Creole status of

Antoinette, the ontology of miscegenation, and a natural process of racial and cultural commingling within colonialism constitute the conditions for her rejection and isolation. Rochester's hatred of Antoinette is unmitigated and absolute, so much so that it is to be reinforced by her application of the Obeah 'love potion' on him. The love potion which Antoinette had obtained from Christophine, in spite of her warning, hoping that it would restore his love for her, had made Rochester feel like a zombie:

> I woke in the dark after dreaming that I was buried alive, and when I was awake the feeling of suffocation persisted. Something was lying across my mouth, hair with a sweet heavy smell. I threw it off but still I could not breathe... As I watched, hating, her face grew smooth and very young again... I drew the sheet over her gently as if I covered a dead girl. (87-88)

Childhood experiences had already prepared Antoinette for living a life of isolation. Rejection had become so much a part of her existence that even her dreams were an anticipation of the approaching doom and alienation. During the course of her narrative Antoinette describes in detail three dreams that are a revelation of her state of mind—her isolation and fear of the unknown people and places, condition of entrapment and self-alienation. The first one, a childhood dream that she recounts, expresses her sense of isolation and insecurity. But the narrative also includes how she afterwards wakes up to realize that the actual world is insensitive to her fears:

> I dreamed that I was walking in the forest. Not alone. Someone who hated me was with me, out of sight. I could hear heavy footsteps coming closer and though I struggled and screamed I could not move. I woke crying. The covering sheet was on the floor and my mother was looking down at me.
>
> 'Did you have a nightmare?'
>
> Yes, a bad dream.'
>
> She sighed and covered me up. 'You were making such a noise. I must go to Pierre, you've frightened him.' (11-12)

Antoinette's second dream anticipates her marriage and bondage at Thornfield Hall, Rochester's estate in England. She dreams of having been imprisoned in an English building, in an English landscape:

> I had left the house at Coulibri, it is still night and I am walking towards the forest, I am wearing a long dress and thin slippers, so I walk with difficulty, following the man who is with me and holding up the skirt of my dress. It is white and beautiful and I don't wish to get it soiled. I follow him, sick with fear but I make no effort to save myself; if anyone were to try to save me, I would refuse. This must happen. Now we have reached the forest. We are under the tall dark

> trees and there is no wind. 'Here?' He turns and looks at me, his face is black with hatred, and when I see this I begin to cry… Now I do not try to hold up my dress, it trails in the dirt, my beautiful dress. We are no longer in the forest but in an enclosed garden surrounded by a stone wall and the trees are different trees. I do not know them. There are steps leading upwards… I dreamed I was in Hell. (34)

As for her third dream, Antoinette sees herself at Thornfield Hall in a gilt framed mirror, framed as if to fit a particular image. The looking glasses in nineteenth century literature by women were a commonplace metaphor to signify their confined nature. The complete transformation, through confinement, of the woman from her ambiguous 'real' self to an unrecognizable 'ghost' also brings about psychic rupture and a condition of self-alienation that are instantiated by Antoinette's inability to recognize herself in the mirror: "It was then that I saw her—the ghost. The woman with streaming hair. She was surrounded by a gilt frame but I knew her…" (123). This is one example of the 'English Obeah' which Antoinette had accused Rochester of practicing when he had changed her name to Bertha, that transforms a living being into a "ghost", a zombie.

The dreams are visual forms of different states of Antoinette's pathological psychic states. These are the cumulative results of the loss she has undergone, and neglect as well as violence she has suffered at the hands of many people. Having been deprived of her father and mother respectively by death and insanity, and a victim of mercenary purposes of her step-father and brother, Antoinette had been forced to marry a stranger. Her only friends Tia, in childhood, and Christophine, after her marriage to Rochester, had abandoned her. It is Rochester who becomes her greatest tormentor. I shall dwell on Rochester's violence on Antoinette at some length in this section of the essay and explore the cultural as well as psycho-pathology of Antoinette's madness.

Rochester's hatred of Antoinette can be generally understood as an extension of his colonial hatred of the native and black Caribbeans. Annette Kolodny, in her book *Lay of the Land* notes the inherent contradictions in the European mind regarding the natives of America. Even while hoping for an Eden in the newly discovered land early European settlers in America, who came with their own baggage of preconceived notions of morality and ideal behavior, regarded the natives as morally inferior to the Europeans:

> Along with their explicit hopes of commercial, religious, and political gains… explorers and settlers in the New World can be said to have carried with them a "yearning for paradise"… Arthur Barlowe's account of his "First Voyage Made to the Coasts of America…" described the Indian women… as a kind of emblem for a land that was… entertaining the Europeans "with all love and kindness…"

> Not until the end of the seventeenth century, when the tragic contradictions inherent in such experience could no longer be ignored, were the Indian women depicted more usually as hag-like, ugly and immoral. (5)

But his hatred becomes particularized and intense, with Antoinette as the object of it, when she offers resistance to the civilizing ministrations he applies to her in order to transform her into a civilized English wife. When his plans meet resistance he becomes frustrated and vengeful towards her and starts calling her mad and hysterical. It is also not to be forgotten that in the nineteenth century European imagination, as pointed out by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, women who did not behave like angels were considered to be irrational beings and monsters. Rochester's interpretation of Antoinette's 'hysterics,' such as her ripping up of the bed-sheet, or her murderous attack on him, as 'madness' is therefore, obvious. But these acts are not so much symptomatic of her madness as her violent reaction against her being called mad. However, ascribing 'madness' to her is a devious act on the part of Rochester to hide his regrets at his inability to transform Antoinette into his image of an ideal English woman, and to inculcate into her acceptance and regard for English values: "her fixed ideas would never change" (58). He formulates the ideas of 'correct behaviour' and 'purer tastes' of English culture in order to negatively judge Antoinette and take revenge on her by denying her whatever she held dear to her heart and soul:

> She'll not laugh in the sun again. She'll not dress up and smile at herself in that damnable looking glass. So pleased, so satisfied. Vain, silly creature. Made for loving? Yes, but she'll have no lover, for I don't want her and she'll see no other.
>
> The tree shivers. Shivers and gathers all its strength. And waits... She said she loved this place. This is the last she'll see of it. I'll watch for one tear, one human tear... I'll take her in my arms, my lunatic. She's mad but mine, mine... My lunatic. My mad girl... (106-107)

Hysteria was by definition a female disease taking its name from the Greek word for womb, *hyster* and was considered as a kind of female sexual pathology. Rochester's interpretation of Antoinette's 'hysterical reactions' to remarks made by Amelie as 'madness' is a reminder of the nineteenth century perverted attitude towards women's emotional outbursts. Also, as Groneman suggests, throughout the nineteenth century hysteria, like nymphomania and erotomania, was considered a kind of female sexual pathology. This kind of sexual pathologization of Antoinette amounts to her dehumanization. She comes to be identified with inert objects and states of nature.

Although he states: "the sight of a dress which she'd left lying on her bedroom floor made me breathless and savage with desire" (58), he would

still condemn her for a lack of self-restraint. In fact the seeds of hatred had been sown in his mind long back from the day of his arrival at Granbois when with his inbred English values he had judged Antoinette's passionate expression of her desires with suspicion, and covering up for his own 'savage' desires he had attributed to Antoinette moral laxity. He misinterprets her innocent remarks about her wish for death in Freudian terms and ascribes it to licentiousness:

> Die then. Sleep. It is all that I can give you... wonder if she ever guessed how near she came to dying. In her way, not in mine. It was not a safe game to play—in that place. Desire, Hatred, Life, Death came very close in the darkness. Better not know how close. (59)

In his determination to belittle and humiliate Antoinette, Rochester had gone to bed with Amelie. His suspicions and rejection of Antoinette, and most importantly his loud love-making with Amelie within her ear-shot, had driven Antoinette to insanity. The final rejection by her husband had made Antoinette withdraw into silence, and go mad. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their discussion of *Jane Eyre* observe how the nineteenth century woman "mediates on the injustices of her life, and fantasizes 'some strange expedient to achieve escape from insupportable oppression... however, little Jane chooses... [a] terrifying alternative: escape through madness" (341). As a matter of fact Antoinette is not very different from Jane.

While *Wide Sargasso Sea* tells us the story of man-woman relationship complicated by the oppressive structures of patriarchy, racial arrogance, sexual jealousy and hypocrisy, what is brought to the fore is the dynamics of the entrapment Antoinette is subjected to and her struggle for escape and freedom. This dynamics is inflected in terms of the thematic of culture versus nature, with Rochester and Antoinette embodying their oppositional thrusts.

Rochester's intentions to transform and frame Antoinette to fit his image of an ideal English wife are made clear in his unconscious sketching of a woman in an English house where she is no more than a skeletal figure:

> I drew a house surrounded by trees. A large house. I divided the third floor into rooms and in one room I drew a standing woman—a child's scribble, a dot for a head, a larger one for the body, a triangle for a skirt, slanting lines for arms and feet. But it was an English house. English trees. (105-106)

Undoubtedly, it is Thornfield Hall of *Jane Eyre* that he is sketching. But Rochester's drawing can also be understood as a parody of 'art'. It is the reversal of an idea discussed by Leo Marx:

> What is attractive in pastoralism is the felicity represented by an image of natural landscape, a terrain either unspoiled or, if cultivated, rural.

> Movement toward such a symbolic landscape also may be understood as movement away from an "artificial" world, a world identified with "art" using this word in its broadest sense to mean the disciplined habits of mind or arts developed by organized communities. In other words, this impulse gives rise to a symbolic motion away from centres of civilization toward their opposite, nature... from the city toward the country. When this impulse is unchecked, the result is a simple-minded wishfulness, a romantic perversion of thought and feeling. (9-10)

Rochester's sketch, on the other hand, is an expression of his desire for a 'movement' towards the 'artificial'—away from nature towards culture or civilization, from country to city. For Rhys, however, such an attitude would be a 'perversion of thought and feeling' with regard to Rochester, but not so in the case of Antoinette. Antoinette is one with nature. She identifies herself with nature:

> All the flowers in the world were in our garden and sometimes when I was thirsty I licked raindrops from the Jasmine leaves after a shower. If I could make you see it, because they destroyed it and it is only here now.' She struck her forehead. (84)

Rochester's perverse desire to control and subdue everything that was native to the Caribbean is expressed through images taken from nature:

> The hurricane months are not so far away, I thought, and saw that tree, strike its root deeper, making ready to fight the wind. Useless. If and when it comes they'll all go. Some of the royal palms stand... Stripped of their branches, like tall brown pillars, still they stand—defiant. Not for nothing are they called royal. The bamboos take an easier way, they bend to the earth and lie there, creaking, groaning, crying for mercy. The contemptuous wind passes, not caring for these abject things. (Let them live) Howling, shrieking, laughing the wind blast passes.
>
> But all that's some months away... Yet I think of my revenge and hurricanes. (106)

In fact nature has always been the refuge for Antoinette. In her childhood, when she felt abandoned by her mother, Antoinette sought for security among inanimate objects, and in the company of nature:

> I lay thinking, 'I am safe. There is the corner of the bedroom door and the friendly furniture. There is the tree of life in the garden and the wall green with moss. The barrier of the cliffs and the high mountains. And the barrier of the sea. I am safe. I am safe from strangers'. (12)

But if the "tree of life" grew in her garden, she was also denied the forbidden fruit. The "barrier of the cliffs and the high mountains" or "sea"

would not keep her safe from the oppressive values of English culture, domesticity and femininity. Just as Mr. Mason had done with Antoinette's mother, Rochester brings along from across the seas the Victorian ideals of female sexuality that aim at restraining her passions. The erotic and racial configurations of the Caribbean as well as pathologization of Antoinette's psycho-sexuality are acts of violence implicit in the culturalist projection of British colonial power. The violence reaches a climax when Antoinette is displaced from her island home to England (which to Antoinette is like a dream) and her entrapment in the attic of Thornfield Hall. She becomes Rochester's possession, although dispossessed of any trace of her native Caribbean subjectivity. In the attic room she'll have neither "sun" nor "smile at herself" in a looking glass.

In England, Antoinette yearns for a return to nature, to her past life in the pristine atmosphere of her island. Her nostalgic longing becomes apparent towards the end of the novel in her dream:

> I turned round and saw the sky. It was red and all my life was in it. I saw the grandfather clock and Aunt Cora's patchwork, all colours, I saw the orchids and the stephanotis and the jasmine and the tree of life in flames. I saw the chandelier and the red carpet downstairs and the bamboos and the tree ferns, the gold ferns and the silver, and the soft green velvet of the moss on the garden wall. I saw my doll's house and the books and the picture of the Miller's Daughter. I heard the parrot call as it did when he saw a stranger, Qui est la? Qui est la? and the man who hated me was calling too, Bertha! Bertha! The wind caught my hair and it streamed out like wings. It might bear me up, I thought, if I jumped to those hard stones. But when I looked over the edge I saw the pool at Coulibri. Tia was there. She beckoned to me and when I hesitated, she laughed... Someone screamed and I thought; why did I scream? I called 'Tia' and jumped and woke. (123-124)

Her desire for return to nature is an expression of the fact that the civilized society was a singularly repressive society that made a virtue of suppression of natural instinctual needs. The sentiments resulting from such repressive systems, Marx would argue, "take on a pathological coloring, as if symptomatic of a collective neurosis" (Marx 9). Rochester, therefore, interprets Antoinette's desire for a pastoral past as a neurotic fear of civilized European society.

Antoinette's intense longing for return to nature is a result of her isolation which is now total and absolute. While in Jamaica, Antoinette had felt psychologically isolated, but on her arrival in England she is physically isolated from the rest of the world. Displaced from her island home by Rochester, in the attic room Antoinette feels dissociated even from herself. Her third dream already mentioned signifies it. In the quote

given below we find her in a state of psychic rupture and fragmentation, so that she views a fragment of herself being separated from her in time and space. The imagery of looking-glass and window suggest dissonant time-space frames of the fragmented selves. Analytical and vivid, the narrative mounts in a feverish pitch to the most difficult question about self-identity, which carries the thematic load of *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a postcolonial novel:

> I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with her scents, her pretty clothes and her looking glass.
>
> There is no looking-glass here and I don't know what I am like now. I remember watching myself brush my hair and how my eyes looked back at me. The girl I saw was myself yet not quite myself. Long ago when I was a child and very lonely I tried to kiss her. But the glass was between us—hard, cold and misted over with my breath. Now they have taken everything away. What am I doing in this place and who am I? (117)

It is quite clear that Rochester has taken his revenge and deprived Antoinette of all that she loved and succeeded in making her his "lunatic girl". If Antoinette is to be considered mad, there is reason for her madness. The problem of her identity and her need for acceptance are as much a part of her inheritance from her Creole mother, as madness is. Like the parrot Coco, Antoinette articulates her desire for a well-defined identity. But unlike the simplistic reply that Coco gives to its own question, 'Che` Coco Che` Coco', which it has been trained to mimic by its master, Antoinette's situation is more complex. The mimicry of the colonial language by a parrot that is native to the Caribbean island becomes a metaphor for the duplication of identity of Antoinette. Mr. Mason's clipping off of Coco's wings is symbolic of restricting the freedom of his wife. Not being able to fly the bird had died a horrific death, its wings caught in flames, when the house at Coulibri was burnt down by the ex-slaves: "Coco [was] on the glacis railings with his feathers alight. He made an effort to fly down but his clipped wings failed him and he fell screeching" (22-23).

Coco's death serves as a symbolic silencing of the voice of the Creole woman who demands a place and an identity for herself. The ambiguity of Annette's identity, the colonial and patriarchal restraints as exercised by Mr. Mason and non-acceptance by either culture or race—white and black, her final psychological breakdown and confinement in a room by her husband, are in anticipation of Antoinette's fate at the end of the novel. Antoinette had observed her mother's identification with the parrot in her madness: "I heard my mother screaming 'qui est la? Qui est la?' then 'don't touch me. I'll kill you if you touch me. Coward. Hypocrite. I'll kill you" (25). Nature's role, therefore, as a realm of self-discovery and freedom, is symbolically nullified by the death of Coco. If Coco is symbolic of

nature, Mr Mason, who clips its wings, is symbolic of civilization that destroys everything that is natural.

Denial of freedom had led to Antoinette's state of paranoia and madness. Her longing for return to the natural world of her Caribbean home can be understood in terms of Freud's analysis of the desire for an "unspoiled landscape". Leo Marx quotes Freud to associate

> [...] the nostalgic feeling we often attach to the unspoiled landscape as an illustration of our chronic yearning to enjoy 'freedom from the grip of the external world... The 'reservation' is to maintain the old condition of things which has been regretfully sacrificed... there everything may grow and spread as it pleases, including what is useless and even what is harmful. The mental realm of phantasy[sic] is also such a reservation reclaimed from the encroaches of the reality principle. (8)

Towards the end of the novel Antoinette fantasizes about being at Coulibri. Her fantasies take the form of a dream where in an act symptomatic of revenge she sets fire to Rochester's house at Thornfield Hall, and takes the fatal plunge. Sylvie Maurel appropriately observes: "Jean Rhys finds a way of altering the stereotype of the silenced woman: the Rhys woman may well be silenced, but hers is an active, productive form of silence" (63).

Works Cited

Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre.* New York: Carleton, 1874, Google Book Search. Web.18 June 2012.

Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar. *The Mad Woman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination.* London: Yale UP, 2000. Print.

Groneman, Carol. 'Nymphomania: The Historical construction of Female Sexuality', *Signs* 19.2 (1994): 337-367. Print.

Kempadoo, Kamala. 'Theorizing Sexual Relations in the Caribbean: Prostitution and the Problem of the Exotic'. *Confronting Power, Theorizing Gender: Interdisciplinary Perspectives in the Caribbean.* Ed. Eudine Barriteau. Jamaica: U of the West Indies Press, 2003. 159-172. Print.

Kevin, P. Murphy and Jennifer M. Spear Ed. *Historicizing Gender and Sexuality.* Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2011. Google Book Search. Web. 02 June 2012.

Kolodny, Annette. *Lay of the Land: Metaphors of Experience and History in American Life and Letters.* N.p: U of North Carolina P. 1984. Print.

Kubitschek, Missy Dehn. 'Charting the Empty Spaces of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*'. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 9. 2 (1987): 23-28. Print.

Mallory, Chaone. 'Acts of Objectification and Repudiation of Dominance: Leopold, Ecofeminism, and the Ecological Narrative'. *Ethics and Environment* 6 (2003): 252-272. Print.

Marx, Leo. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America.* London:OUP, 1964. Print.

Maurel, Sylvie. *Jean Rhys.* London: Macmillan, 1985. Print.

Rhys, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea.* London: Penguin Books, 1968. Print.

Ross, Marlon B. 'Naturalizing Gender: Woman's Place in Wordsworth's Ideological Landscape'. *ELH* 53. 2 (Summer 1986): 339-410. Print.

Warren, Karen J. *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What Is and Why it Matters.* New York: Rowen and Littlefield Publishers, 2000. Print.

RELOCATING 'MINABAZAAR': SANITIZATION OF MUSICAL PRACTICES IN PREMCHAND'S *SEVASADAN*

P.Muralidhar Sharma

The performing arts in India were being radically redefined in the first three decades of the twentieth century, a time when dance and music were being given an explicitly political meaning in order to make them available for the imperatives of nation-building. The politicization of art forms also involved the relocation of traditional performers in new performance contexts. A certain need to 'revive' these art forms was increasingly felt by the middle class, which assumed the custodianship of music in the twentieth century. In order to appropriate music for its own purposes, the middle-class initiated a process of sanitization of the musical practices of the traditional performers. This kind of 'cleansing' of these art forms went hand in hand with purging them of their supposedly erotic associations with the devadasis and the courtesans. Different musical traditions came to be identified as 'classical' and innovations were made in pedagogy and performance so that music could be made to represent a certain notion of 'Indianness'.

Innovators like Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande and Vishnu Digambar Paluskar revived and refashioned Hindusthani music as 'classical' by providing a textual base to the existing musical practices and by institutionalizing them. In her book *Two Men and Music: Nationalism in the Making of an Indian Classical Tradition*, Janaki Bakhle discusses the contribution of Bhatkhande and Paluskar to the project of the classicization of music:

> Cultural nationalists, some of whom were themselves musicians, worked hard to reclaim the space of music for the nation. In the hands of Bhakti nationalists like Paluskar, so named here because his claims were on behalf of a sacralized bhakti (devotionalism) rather than vedic textual Brahminism, music was envisioned as the instrument of Hindu proselytizing, with bhajans(devotional music) supplanting all other forms. For secular musicologists like Bhatkhande, music was the hope for a new modern, national, and academic art that would stay away from religion. What both sets of nationalists had in common was the sense that music itself was on the verge of extinction, either because it had lapsed into degeneracy or because it had failed to become adequately modern.

Both men worried about the imminent disappearance of music. Its recovery hinged on what Indian music lacked-namely a connected history, a systematic and orderly pedagogy, and respectability... Bhatkhande tried to classify, categorize, and classicize music, whereas Paluskar wanted to

cleanse and sacralize it. (7-8)

It is commonly assumed that it was Paluskar who was instrumental in making music available to women through his immensely popular Gandharva Mahavidyalayas. Bakhle argues that this could only have been made possible by the minimization of the courtesans' possibilities to perform:

> Paluskar's bhakti nationalism "Hinduized" music and sacralized its pedagogy, but it also created the conditions under which women could enter a public cultural sphere without the fear of social disapproval. Yet even as middle class women moved slowly into a new public cultural space, they replaced an entire generation performers, known pejoratively as baijis... (11)

In order to restore respectability to music and to make it available for a symbolic as well as political purpose, the 'chaste', 'monogamous', 'respectable' Hindu wife was constructed as the legitimate propagator of these art forms. Particular notions of female respectability were central to the project of revival and reform, and the courtesans, as also the devadasis, came to be referred to as 'prostitutes'. Their opportunities to perform were minimized, and they were being gradually replaced as 'artistes' by the women from Brahmin households.

Against the backdrop as outlined above, I would make an attempt in this essay to read Munshi Premchand's *Sevasadan* vis-à-vis the changes in the social history of music in the first quarter of the twentieth century. *Sevasadan* was first written in Urdu in 1917 under the title *Bazaar-e-Husn*, and it had to wait till 1924 to be published in its Urdu version . It shot into instant fame when it was recast in Hindi and published in 1918 under the title *Sevasadan*. Premchand had firm faith in the idea that literature could be made the instrument of social reform, and his *Sevasadan* is the manifestation of this belief. He was fully conscious of the reformative imperatives of time during which he was writing the novel. In this essay, I would refer to Snehal Singhavi's English translation of the novel, which was published with an introduction by Vasudha Dalmia, who says that it was "an era of high nationalism; Hindi was seeking to set up its own respectable literary canon; and if nation, woman, social reform and the reordering of the city landscape could be brought together thus educatively; the novel could do none other than win public approval".

Premchand's *Sevasadan* is centered around the movement for the eviction of the courtesans from the city of Benaras and their relocation in the outskirts. Social reform cuts across life in Benaras, and the novel makes a faithful depiction of the city in one of its transitional phases. Suman, the protagonist, is a married woman who is not satisfied with what marriage has given her. Living with a man who is not financially well-off she is

dissatisfied, and she constantly muses over her fate. She develops intimacy with Subhadra, wife of Padamsingh Sharma, an influential man in Benaras. The episode where Suman visits Padamsingh's place for the Holi celebrations is strategically placed in the narrative. It is after this event that Suman is kicked out of the house by her husband Gajadhar Pande. Suman finds refuge in Padamsingh's place, but the fear of scandal makes him send her out of his house. She ends up at the brothel run by Bholibai, a renowned courtesan of Dalmandi. Her luxurious life does provide momentary satisfaction to Suman, but the reformists like Babu Vitthaldas try to influence her with their speeches and she finally chooses to give up prostitution altogether. An arrangement is made for her at an ashram meant for the widows, but social scorn drives her out of this place as well. Suman's sister Shanta manages to marry Sadan, (the nephew of Padamsingh) after a series of trials and tribulations. Suman does not find respect even in her sister's home, and she is finally placed in *Sevasadan*, the ashram constructed by the municipal corporation for the rehabilitation of the daughters of former courtesans.

In writing a novel like *Sevasadan*, Premchand was also constantly aware of the seamy side of nationalism and the nationalist movement. To him nationalism was an ideological camouflage for dominant class interests:

> For nationalism, with its genuine and ever increasing mass appeal, was operating at two levels. At the level of sentiment, symbolized by the struggle against alien imperialism, it tended to bring millions of subject people into an undifferentiated fraternity of the exploited. But at another level it so operated as to promote the material interests of some sections within the large fraternity; without, of course, forgetting to make vague generalized promises to all once freedom had been won. (Chandra 601)

Premchand works from this dual perspective throughout the novel. Even when we are introduced to Vitthaldas, we cannot miss the skepticism with which the author views his speeches.

There is a growing consensus about woman's 'chastity' in the novel, and the courtesans are viewed as 'unchaste' by the respectable members of the society. The chaste Hindu wife is valorized as the upholder of the Hindu race. Suman's association with Bholibai, the courtesan, is discouraged by Gajadhar precisely because she is a prostitute. "Do you care at all about your honour or your chastity?" warns Gajadhar (*Sevasadan* 21). The superiority of the Brahmin wife to the courtesan lies in the fact of her being chaste even in the worst of times. In another place, Babu Vitthaldas is seen rebuking Suman for her decision to reside at Dalmandi: "Suman, you have shamed the entire Hindu race" (*Sevasadan* 69). In this episode, as in many others, Babu Vitthaldas articulates a typically nationalist-reformist viewpoint, one that places a lot of weight on a married woman's chastity and appropriates it as a claim for superiority. Tanika

Sarkar's proposition that the purity and chastity of the Hindu wife do not merely have symbolic, but political dimensions is particularly relevant:

> The absolute and unconditional chastity of the Hindu wife, extending beyond the death of her husband, was equally strongly grounded by this discourse in her own desire. This purity, since it is supposedly a conscious moral choice, becomes at once a sign of difference and of superiority, a Hindu claim to power. The politics of women's monogamy then is the condition for the possible Hindu nation: the one is often explicitly made to stand for the other... Woman's chastity, then, has a real and stated, not merely symbolic, political value. (Sarkar 41)

In another place, Sarkar says:

> As opposed to the man who has succumbed to the effects of colonization, the Hindu wife, by virtue of her chastity, protects the honour of the Hindu race. The Hindu woman's unique steadfastness to the husband in the face of gross double standards, her unconditional, uncompromising monogamy, were celebrated as the sign that marked Hindus off from the rest of the world, and which constituted the Hindu claim to nationhood. The chaste body of the Hindu woman was thus made to carry an unusual political weight since she had maintained this difference in the face of foreign rule. The Hindu man, in contrast...had allowed himself to be colonized and surrendered his autonomy before the assaults of western power-knowledge. (Sarkar 91)

Therefore, the Hindu wife is not to violate her chastity by associating with the courtesan. The body of the Hindu wife was seen as the pure and inviolable site which could represent the nation in its equally 'pure' and pristine state. In an attempt to prove herself superior to Bholi, Suman becomes religious and tries to assert her wifely status through her devotion and piety: "Suman turned religious. To secure her spiritual capital and be better than Bholi she started observing a number of rituals" (*Sevasadan* 22). This may be seen as a desperate attempt on Suman's part to protect and assert her chastity, which was valorized as the mark of a married Hindu woman.

If the courtesan is perceived as 'unchaste', her association with music has to be redefined so that it could be made to represent the richness of an 'Indian' tradition. This anxiety was especially reflected at a time when music was being appropriated by the middle-class for political purposes and therefore, another fundamental change in the social history of music accompanies the relocation of the courtesans in the novel. The musical practices of the courtesans are being redefined and music is being projected as 'national' and 'Hindu', because of which public performances by courtesans are viewed with disfavour in the novel.

Music and dance performances by the courtesans occupied a central position in the cultural life of Benaras prior to the onset of social reform in the city. The novel shows that music and dance constituted an integral part of life itself in the period before the reformers began their task of sanitization. Suman doesn't believe herself when she sees men from the respectable society attending the concert at Bholibai's. Bholibai also performs at the Ramnavami celebrations in the temple:

> It was the month of Chait. For Ramnavami, Suman went with her friends to the main temple to watch the Janmotsav celebrations. The temple had been ornately decorated. The electric lights made it as bright as a day. And it was very crowded; the courtyard of the temple was completely packed. But over the din of the crowd, one could hear an extraordinary melody coming from inside. Suman peeked in through a window and saw Bholi, singing. In the audience, she saw men of high repute. Some wore a Vaishnav tilak; others had smeared holy ashes on their foreheads; some had beads around their necks and were draped in Ramnami sheets; some were ochre. Since she had seen several of them bathe in the Ganga, she was certain that they were all religious and scholarly men. They now appeared to be in the throes of some divine intoxication induced by Bholi. Through her performance, Bholi glanced around the room seductively, stopping on a face or exchanging glances with one of the men. Every man who locked eyes with Bholi seemed like he was looking in to the eyes of God himself. Suman couldn't believe what she saw. The ground on which she was standing began to slip from under her feet. It was one thing when Suman believed that only wealth bowed its head at Bholi's feet; but now Suman realized that religion had become her devotee as well. Even the most religious men respected her – I had hoped to beat that courtesan with religion and piety, but look at her. She is the epitome of respect and honour in God's home, in this assembly of great men, and yet there isn't even a place for me to sit anywhere in this temple. Suman could not stay there for another instant. (*Sevasadan* 22-23)

The episode is significant because of many reasons. In her attempt to prove herself different from Bholi, Suman embraces religion, something that would sanction her wifely status and thus establish her superiority over the courtesan. Secondly, a courtesan is performing in the religious space of a temple, even when she glances around the room 'seductively' and fills the men with 'divine intoxication'. The performance itself is described in erotic terms, but it is the performative context of the temple that sanctions the performance. The reference is to the period preceding the reform movement when courtesans and their art had an all pervasive influence on the elite sections of Benaras society. Bholibai's performance

in this episode, as in other such episodes, has erotic implications, which would later be dispensed with in the act of sanitization.

Singing and dancing acquire negative implications with the appearance of Babu Vitthaldas on the scene. The novel describes Vitthaldas as a bitter enemy of the singing and dancing girls. Padamsingh hosts a performance by Bholibai in order to celebrate his membership in the municipal council, but fears that Vitthaldas may oppose such an initiative. Suman's musical skills are referred to in this episode: "Suman was a much more accomplished connoisseur of music. She understood the poetry, and she had a keen sense of rhythm and melody. As soon as she heard a song, it would be permanently imprinted in her memory" (*Sevasadan* 32). However, Suman realizes that because of her status as a respectably married woman, she cannot appear in the public as freely as Bholibai does. Though a married woman, Suman is not without ambition: "Why are people so impressed with her voice and grace? Her voice has no range. My voice is much better than hers. If I had even a month's training, I would sing much better than her. I know how to flirt. I know how to look coy and smile." Suman compares her own musical talents with those of Bholibai and concludes that she has a better voice than Bholibai's and she knows how to flirt. What one observes is the almost inevitable association of the courtesan's music with erotic gestures and behavior. What distinguishes Suman from Bholibai is not her singing skills, but the relative autonomy Bholibai has over own her life. Suman regrets that her appearance in public is controlled by her husband Gajadhar.

When Suman approaches Bholi after being thrown out of Padamsingh's place, the possibilities of her learning music open up. The moment when Suman steps out of marriage is also the moment when she thinks of the enhancement of her musical skills as a possibility. She asks Bholi: "How long will it take me to learn to sing?" Bholi replies by assuring her that she only needs to learn ghazals and popular songs:

> You will pick it up in six months. No one really asks for elaborate songs here. You don't really need to know classical forms and raags. Popular ghazals are fashionable here. If you learn a few short tunes and a few popular songs from the theatres, that will be good enough. Here, all you need are good looks and conversation, and God has given you enough of both. (*Sevasadan* 44-45)

In another episode, Sadan is enchanted by the melodious voices of the courtesans at Dalmandi. Sadan's discussions with the vendors establish an inextricable interconnection between music and a woman's sexuality: "They would tell him all the news from the brothels, and intense discussions would commence about who was the best singer and the most beautiful... At first, ghazals didn't mean anything to him. But now, when he heard them, they made his heart strings vibrate like a sitar. He was enchanted by the melodious voices" (*Sevasadan* 65-66).

Ghazals are a variety of popular love songs commonly sung by the courtesans to the accompaniment of hand gestures. Mirza Muhammad Hadi Ruswa's Urdu novel *Umrao Jan Ada* presents us with a faithful but romantic picture of nineteenth century Lucknow, where the courtesans composed and performed ghazals. Ghazals are normally thought to express erotic sentiments and therefore considered suitable for the courtesans.

Babu Vitthaldas is concerned with the uprooting of not just the courtesans but their musical practices as well: "First, the courtesans must be removed from public places, and second, the custom of singing and dancing by courtesans must be stopped" (*Sevasadan* 99). In the later episodes of the novel, music and dance performances by courtesans are condemned and courtesans are looked upon with disapproval, but music itself is eulogized as national heritage. Kumvar Aniruddh Singh voices this fundamental shift in the definitions of music:

> Yes. I love the sitar. I get nauseated when I have to listen to that awful harmonium or piano. These English instruments have ruined our music. No one listens to the sitar any more. And whatever is left is being destroyed by the theatres. Everywhere you look, people are talking about ghazals and quawwalis. In a few years, Indian music will be a forgotten art, like archery. Music brings forth the noblest sentiments. Ever since singing has declined in popularity, we have become a completely unfeeling people. And you can see the effect it has had on our literature. It's really a shame that the country that produced priceless epics like the Ramayan, gave birth to wonderful poetry like the Sursagar, has to rely on translations for even ordinary novels. (*Sevasadan* 162)

The link that Aniruddh Singh establishes between musical culture and literary works can be seen as an attempt to appropriate musical practices as part of national heritage. Aniruddh Singh articulates a nationalist position by defining Indian musical instruments in opposition to Western instruments. His contempt for ghazals and quawalis can be understood in the light of Bhatkhande's and Paluskar's attempts to revive and redefine music, by virtue of which the Muslim component in Indian music was dispensed with. Music is being recast as 'respectable'; Anirruddh Singh says that music evokes 'noble sentiments'. The de-eroticization of music is being affected in order to make it a befitting symbol for the nation.

Seth Balbhadradas in the novel is, however, against the passing of the resolution for the eviction of the courtesans from Dalmandi. In order to justify his position, he takes recourse to the nationalist's understanding of music as a symbol of tradition:

> We are proud of our own music. Those who are familiar with Italian and French music also appreciate the character, melody and depth of Indian music. But who can stop the march of time? The very institution that some of our reformers are trying to root out is the last vestige

> of this pure- this heavenly treasure. Will you destroy this tradition and cruelly stamp out the priceless traditions that our ancestors have passed down? Do you realize that whatever cultural and religious values remain are due to our music? Otherwise no one would know the names of Ram, Krishna, and Shiva today! Even our worst enemies couldn't come up with a better plan to erase the feeling of racial pride from our hearts. (*Sevasadan* 141)

The speech of Seth Balbhadradas is steeped in a revivalist rhetoric of music even when he is against the proposal of the eviction of courtesans from the city. His projection of music as a source of racial pride is suggestive. He emphasizes the importance of melody and depth in musical practice and provides a devotional base to music by his mention of music as a perpetuator of spiritual knowledge. This attempt at sacralizing music is wedded with the attempt to define music as Hindu. He uses the newly won status of music as national heritage in order to validate his stance, eulogizes the courtesans as protectors of a rich tradition of music and argues that they must be allowed to practise their art.

The dissatisfaction of the guests over the lack of dance performances by courtesans at Sadan's wedding ceremony is a case in point. The event is significant not simply because it shows the changing perceptions of the society towards the art of the courtesans. The speech of Sadhu Gajanand also attempts to purge music of its supposedly erotic connections by giving it a devotional base: "Fools! There is no dance here, no courtesans...The songs of Krishna are so wonderful, but no one listens to them, no one has ears any more. Everyone wants to see whores dance instead..." (*Sevasadan* 145-6).

In this passage, the dance of the courtesans is perceived as erotic in its implications, and essentially opposed to the songs of Krishna, for instance. A kind of reformist zeal in the form of concern for the impoverished peasants and widowed women can be seen as running side by side the contempt for the courtesans and their art. This might be the influence of the nationalist movement. The Mahatma mentions the dance of the gods more than once and Shiva's "tandav nritya" is also referred to: "The entire world is a school of dance and people dance their own dances in it... Come let me show you Shankar's tandav nritya.Your lust will not be satisfied with this dance! Ha! Ignorant statues! Ha! Slaves of pleasure! Aren't you ashamed just to say the word "dance"?' (*Sevasadan* 146) The speech has a dramatic effect on the rioters and some of them start singing hymns immediately after the Mahatma leaves. The singing of the hymns, they think, will probably act as a corrective for their longing for the dance of the courtesans.

On another occasion, Sadan, ignorant of the change that has taken place at Dalmandi, visits the place with the intention to satiate his carnal

urges. This episode is highly suggestive because it incorporates all the arguments that I have been trying to make in this essay.

Sadan visits Dalmandi with a strong craving for sex but his desire is suppressed on seeing that there are no courtesans around. They have already moved to Alaipur, a place situated on the banks of the Ganga, on the outskirts of the city of Benaras. In place of Suman's brothel, Sadan finds a board that reads "School of Music":

> As he kept walking, he saw the building where Suman used to live. There, he heard the sweet notes of a song. He looked up in surprise at a big signboard. It read, "School of Music". Sadan went upstairs. This was the very room where he had spent months with Suman. His mind brought up many memories. He sat down on the bench and began listening to the music. Twenty or twenty-five men were sitting there and learning how to play music. Someone played the sitar, someone a sarangi, someone a tabla, and one old man was teaching each one of them in turn. He seemed to be very knowledgeable about music. Sadan's mind was so engrossed in listening to the music that he sat there for fifteen minutes. He wished that he could come here to learn to sing...He wanted to get up when the music instructor began playing this song on the sitar-
>
> *Merciful Mother, accept Bharat as your own.*
> *Console us, O Mother, for separated from you, we are full of anxiety.*
> *Call me beloved child and laugh and embrace me.*
> *Merciful Mother, accept Bharat as your own.*
> *Awaken again, dear Mother! The pride of the sleeping Aryan race.*
> *Break the chain and throw off the fetters of our slavery.*
> *Merciful Mother, accept Bharat as your own.*
>
> The song opened the floodgates of noble sentiment in Sadan's heart...This song produced within him an enormous, internal melody. The image of the compassionate goddess mother stood before his mind's eye. A poor, hurt, starving, and exhausted child was staring at the goddess with humility, and with both arms raised. With tears in his eyes, he said- Accept, Merciful Mother, Bharat as your own. (*Sevasadan* 254-55)

This change in the performative contexts of music can be understood in relation to the changes introduced by Vishnu Digambar Paluskar in the music world of north India. The immensely popular Gandharva Mahavidyalayas were set up by Paluskar as an attempt at institutionalizing music. These Mahavidyalayas accomplished the task of disseminating music education to the students, most of whom were women from respectable backgrounds. The establishment of these music schools helped restore respectability to music, thereby separating it from the courtesans. Music was primarily defined as devotional. The scene is also suggestive of

the shift of authority from the hands of the traditional performers to the hands of men who are "very knowledgeable about music". This expression might refer to the acquiring of textual knowledge about music, which became a necessary precondition for the attainment of proficiency in 'classical' music. Proficiency in music was no more measured by one's ability to sing or to compose.

V.N.Bhatkhande, for his part, made desperate attempts to found a textual base for Indian classical music. The very fact that a man takes over as the disseminator of a musical tradition in the novel calls for an extended explanation. Nationalism was an exclusionist ideology in itself and it marginalized all those aspects of culture which did not match its agenda of unsolicited glorification. Nationalism may also be as a masculinist agenda which appropriated various aspects of a homogenized Indian culture in order to accommodate them in the predominantly patriarchal set up. One might observe this kind of a patriarchisation of music as latent in the instructor's initiative to appropriate the music of the courtesans. The projection of the nation as mother may also be seen as a patriarchal projection that seeks to relieve the mother from libidinal and erotic associations. Music is represented as a predominantly male domain in Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of the Night* (1992), where Sita's musical abilities are paralysed by the restrictions imposed on her by her father-in –law. Sita's creativity is stifled and she is made to accept her role as an obedient wife. The career and achievements of Gopal, another musician are mentioned in great detail, and they highlight the injustice meted out to Sita. The novel can also be read as an interesting study of the ways in which music is appropriated by men and the strategies employed by them to marginalize women within the musical tradition.

It is also significant that music evokes "noble sentiments" in Sadan. In an earlier episode, Aniruddh Singh proudly proclaimed that music evokes noble sentiments. The effect of this music on Sadan can be read in the light of Aniruddh Singh's opinion about music's ennobling power. Music, in this episode, is being put to an entirely different function. It is used largely as a political weapon to create feelings of solidarity amongst the Hindus. Music acts as a strategy for resistance in this episode. Music makes possible the imagining of an exclusive Hindu nation. There is no mention of Muslims in the song, it is the "Aryan race" that is mentioned. This kind of an anxiety to separate Indian art forms from prostitution may also be perceived in the following comment of Babu Vitthaldas where he puts the entire blame for introducing prostitution on the Mughal rulers. "Who knows how this awful custom started? Perhaps it started during the reign of the sensual Muslim badshahs. We have set up a marketplace of sex where there should be libraries, religious assemblies, and public institutions..." (*Sevasadan* 97).

After the rehabilitation of the courtesans at *Sevasadan*, the question of the possibilities of their pursuance of a career in music is raised.

Johrajaan admonishes the courtesans to practice music, because it is a sanctioned skill. In the last chapter of the novel, Subhadra visits Suman at *Sevasadan*. She perceives that the daughters of former courtesans are being trained to become good housewives. These girls sing devotional songs to appease Subhadra:

Dear Father, dear Lord, give us your love and affection.
Rid us of desire, our hearts are content in devotion.

The marital status of a woman legitimized her appearance in the public sphere as a performer. As part of the agenda of reform, devadasis and courtesans were rehabilitated as respectable women by their acceptance of domesticity. The change in performance contexts facilitated the relocation of music on the concert stage, and thinkers like Sarojini Naidu encouraged married women to learn music as they considered them to be the upholders of a rich musical tradition.The karnatic vocalist M.S.Subbulakshmi's career is a case in point.

MS was the daughter of Shanmugavadivu, a devadasi, who later married T.Sadasivam, an influential man in Madras. This man introduced his daughter MS to the Brahmin music world of Madras. In her interviews, MS did make passing references to the fact that it was the security offered by marriage that was important for her. Her biographer TJS George comments that leading a respectable life had been one of her ambitions. It was her husband Sadasivam who supervised all her performances and monitored each and every aspect of it so as to cast MS as a 'respectably married' woman. MS always wore the nine-yard madisar sarees for her performances, since the madisar saree, worn with the pallu tucked in the waist was a symbol of the married Iyer woman. It was Sadasivam who suggested that MS ought to sing devotional songs. Devotional music came to be seen as the only sanctioned form of music for a girl aspiring to become a housewife. The courtesans and their musical practices in the novel have been sanitized and thus made available to the upper and middle classes of the society. A respectable niche for music has been successfully created.

Premchand's *Sevasadan* thus creatively engages with the issue of the contribution of nationalism to the marginalization of the communities of hereditary performers. The novel is also a faithful reflection of the project of relocation not only of the courtesans, but their musical practices as well. Just as the courtesans have been relegated to the margins of the 'respectable' society, their music has also been purged of its erotic associations. Both performance contexts and performance itself have been modified and a political weight seems to have been added to them.

Works Cited

Bakhle, Janaki. *Two Men and Music: Nationalism in the Making of an Indian Classical Tradition* Delhi: Permanent Black, 2006. Print.

Chandra, Sudhir. "Premchand and Indian Nationalism". *Social Scientist* 9.1 (1995): 601-21. JSTOR. Web. 24 Oct.2011.

Chatterjee, Partha. *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories.* New Delhi: OUP,1999. Print.

George, TJS. MS, *A Life in Music.* New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2004. Print.

Hariharan, Githa. *The Thousand Faces of Night.* New Delhi: Penguin, 1992. Print.

Manuel, Peter. "A Historical Survey of the Urdu Ghazal Song in India". *Asian Music* 20.1 (1988): 93-113. JSTOR. Web. 7 Feb 2012.

Oldenberg, Veena Talwar. "Lifestyle as Resistance: The Case of the Courtesans of Lucknow, India." *Feminist Studies* 16.2 (1990): 259-89. JSTOR. Web. 13 Mar.2011.

Premchand, Munshi. *Sevasadan.*Trans. Snehal Singhavi. Ed Vasudha Dalmia. New Delhi: Oxford, 2005. Print.

Ruswa, Mirza Muhammad Hadi. *Umrao Jan Ada: The Courtesan of Lucknow.* Trans. Khushwant Singh and M A Hussaini. New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 2007. Print.

Sarkar, Tanika. *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation.* New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001. Print.

Singh, K.P. "Premchand and Gandhism". *Modern Asian Studies.* 16.4 (2002): 47-52. JSTOR. Web. 24 Oct. 2011.

CONTOURS OF NATIONALISM

Sabita Tripathy &N. K. Mishra

One of the clearest foci of strong resistance to imperial power in colonial societies is the evolution of the concept of 'nation'. It is the concept of a shared community, one which Benedict Anderson calls an 'imagined community' (1983: 15) that has enabled the colonial societies to invent a self-image through which subject people could act to liberate themselves from imperialist oppression. Theorists like Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson champion the cause of nationalism as a legitimate form of political organization appropriate to the social and intellectual conditions of modern world. Gellner (1983) shifts our attention from pre-industrial society to intense industrialization in support of nationalism because the latter can create national consciousness for the maintenance of a homogeneous industrial workforce and polity. But Anderson attributes the growth of nationalism to the dwindling away of strong religious mode of thoughts. The concept of nation is the product of a secular and modern imagination.

Nationalism can be of various kinds. John Plamenatz (1976) focuses our attention on two types of nationalism. One is 'western' that emerged primarily in Western Europe; and the other 'eastern' that is to be found in Eastern Europe, in Asia and Africa, and also in Latin America. In both types 'a state of the development of a particular national culture is measured'. Both types of nationalism are 'primarily a cultural phenomenon', which often takes a 'political form'. 'Eastern' type of nationalism had to re-equip itself in terms of certain global standards set by the advanced nations of Western Europe.

While making a distinction between 'good' nationalism and 'evil' nationalism, Hans Kohn points out that a profoundly liberal idea becomes distorted and produces illiberal movement. Naturally, nationalists have often not been liberal as they have to act in unpropitious conditions for their freedom. Yet their movement represents a universal urge for freedom and progress. Plamenatz gently chides the distaste of the "Western critics of nationalism" (6) for the drawback of the backward peoples in these words:

> In a world in which the strong and rich people have dominated and exploited the poor and the weak peoples, and in which autonomy is held to be a mark of dignity, of adequacy, of the capacity to live as befits human beings, in such a world this kind of nationalism is the inevitable reaction of the poor and the weak. (qtd. in Chatterjee 6)

Nationalism has often had a great humanizing and civilizing influence. It is misleading to brand nationalist politics as a secret conspiracy, terrorism

or nihilism, though these have the same features of nationalism under extreme situations in which they operate. Nationalism has been abused as a self-conscious and rational attempt by the weak and poor people of the world to achieve autonomy and liberty. Elie Kedourie in *Nationalism in Asia and Africa* (1970) seems to be skeptical of nationalism as he believes the ruler and the ruled are 'different species of men' and it befits the political order when this distinction is clearly maintained. He ignores the efficacy of nationalism in developing countries in which the new regime maintains political stability and keeps a fissiparous population under a single and viable control. He also forgets that nationalism provides an impetus to constitutional reforms and can legitimize social changes. He would opt for a political environment in which emotions and passions are kept to a minimum. Anthony Smith (1971) critiques Kedourie's discussion of nationalism as a one-sided misrepresentation. It overlooks the advantages and blessings of nationalist revivals.

The danger of giving over emphasis on nationalism may result in its extreme form to chauvinism and xenophobia which may in turn justify 'organised violence and tyranny'. Excessive importance given to nationalism has been the cause of justification for the brutality of Nazism and Fascism; moreover, it has resulted in racial hatred in the colonies and has given birth to some irrational revivalist movements in the contemporary world. Partha Chatterjee in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (1986:2-3.) directs reader's attention to the harmful effect of nationalism as an ideology. Nationalism can be irrational, narrow, hateful, and destructive. Such harmful effects have been observed in Europe which exported this concept to the rest of the world. His disapproval of this extreme form can be summed up as:

> Nationalism as an ideology is irrational, narrow, hateful, and destructive... It is wholly a European export to the rest of the world. It is also one of Europe's most pernicious exports, for it is not a child of reason or liberty, but of their opposite: of fervent romanticism, of political messianism whose inevitable consequence is the annihilation of freedom. (7)

Critics eulogise the positive aspects of nationalism as a progressive state of a country. It can provide an impetus to constitutional reforms as in India or Ottoman Turkey. It can legitimize sweeping social changes and modernization in a country. Anthony Smith goes on the defensive side by building up a 'core doctrine of nationalism'. His doctrine of nationalism makes a moral claim made up of three separate but interrelated parts such as the "collective self-determination of the people, the expression of national character and individuality, and finally the vertical division of the world into unique nations each contributing its special genius to the common fund of humanity" (23).

Some of the 19th century European writers, particularly Herder, Schlegel, Fichte and Schleiemacher, take the support of culture and language to define a nation which was subsequently taken up by the intellectuals of the East. Other critics emphasize history as a mode of thought in the life of a nation. Kedourie views history as a distinct mode of thought in which the nation can be represented: "Nationalist doctrine...decrees that just as nations exist so nations by definition must have a past" (36). Modern European intellectuals not only posit the view that nations must have a past; it should have a future too. Obviously, the idea of progress is inherent in nationalist thought. In Asia and Africa nationalism set out in search of freedom from European domination. The disparate elements of nationalist thoughts that count in the struggle for freedom can be presented in Kedourie's words as "Resentment and impatience, the depravity of the rich and the virtue of the poor, the guilt of Europe and the innocence of Africa, salvation through violence, the coming of reign of universal love..." (146-7).

Nationalist texts question the moral claim of the colonial masters to rule over the weak states. Nationality denies the inferiority of the colonized people. Nationalism has demonstrated the falsity of the colonial claim that backward people are culturally incapable of ruling themselves in the modern world. Thus, nationalism has been an important feature in the struggle for decolonization. Edward Said argues in favour of self-determination and national independence as the common goal to achieve decolonization:

> Along with armed resistance in places as diverse as nineteenth century Algeria, Ireland and Indonesia, there also went considerable efforts in cultural resistance almost everywhere, the assertions of nationalist identities, and, in the political realm, the creation of associations and parties whose common goal was self-determination and national independence. (xii)

Nationalism asserts that a backward nation can preserve its cultural distinctiveness while modernizing itself. To fight for national culture implies a strong resistance to imperial dominance. Timothy Brennan argues in favour of the need for the preservation of the cultural distinctiveness of the colonized countries:

> The idea of the nation is often based on naturalized myths of racial or cultural origin. That the need to assert such myths of origin was an important feature of much early post-colonial theory and writing, and that it was a vital part of the collective political resistance which focused on the issues of separate identity and cultural distinctiveness. (183)

One should remember that there are other attributes of nationalism as well. Race, geography, tradition, language, size, or some combinations

of these, are insufficient for determining national essence. The imposition of cultural homogeneity from the top through state action can bring 'official nationalism' as in Russia. J.V Stalin enumerates the essential characteristics that can constitute a nation:

> A nation is historically constituted, stable community of people, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture...none of the above characteristic taken separately is sufficient to define a nation. More than that, it is sufficient for a single one of these characteristics to be lacking and the nation ceases to be a nation. (qtd. in Chaterjee, 34.)

Ramsay Muir discusses the various ties of affinity in *Nationalism & AMP Internationalism: The Culmination of Modern History* that are necessary to constitute a nation. Unity of race is supposed to be an essential element in nationhood. In Muir's opinion there is no nation in the world that is not of mixed race. So long as the races merge, there will be free intercourse by intermarriages and other ways. But the most harmful spirit emerges when one of the constituent races tries to assert its sense of superiority over other(s). The mixed races of Hungary could have developed into a nation had not the Magyars held themselves aloof from their Slavonic and Rumanian subjects and treated them as inferiors. The greatest obstacle to the growth of nationalism in India is her rigid caste system which prevented the merger of the masses. The egoistic assertion of racial superiority of Teutonic race in Germany and its fundamental antipathy turned into a big curse in the world. Obviously racialism, the inherent antipathy between races, the sense of superiority of one race over another, is antithetical to nationalism. Generally, the blending of races into a coherent body of people dwelling together and their ties of affinity make it easy for them to understand one another, have the right to enjoy their life in freedom. Ramsay Muir explains cogently what people understand by certain affinities that unite them as a nation:

> It is obviously not the same thing as a race, and not the same thing as a state. It may be provisionally as a body of people who feel themselves to be naturally linked together by certain affinities which are so strong and real for them that they can live happily together, are dissatisfied when disunited and cannot tolerate subjection to peoples who do not share these ties. (14)

Unity of language is a strong element that has a binding force in the formation of nationality. The racialist theories of the Germans are supported by this factor even though it is a fallacious assumption. Yet the unity of language does rarely bring national unity and disunity does not prevent it. Spanish language dominates Central and South America but the people have no political affinity with Spain. Though Americans speak English, they are a distinct nation. The Scots are a nation but some people

speak Gaelic yet others speak English. The Swiss are a nation having no single but several languages. The Belgians are a nation speaking Flemish, French, and German. Unity of language has certainly a nation building force but it is not indispensable for the growth of nationality.

Unity of religion plays a significant role in the formation of a nation. But the attempt to create national unity on the basis of religion has failed. Their religious differences did not prevent the Dutch and the Belgians to live together in a single state. Moreover, religious disunity was the main obstacle to the national movement in Ireland. The strife between Catholics and Dissidents was one of the important causes of the downfall of Poland. Yet there are instances in which deep-rooted religious differences did not stand as an obstacle in national unification. Germany has an almost equal proportion of Protestant and Roman Catholic. England has never known religious unity after the great Reformation. A deep-rooted antipathy between the Hindus and the Muslims has proved fatal to the unity of the peninsula. Religious unity cannot solely bring a strong sense of nationalism among people of a country.

Nationalism arises under a despotic rule where people become fed up with the oppressive maladministration. In Muir's opinion the experience of common subjection to an alien power for a long period of time could help in the formation of a nation:

> Common subjection, during a long stretch of time, to a firm and systematic government, even to a government of a despotic character, may well help to create a nation, especially if the government is able to establish a system of just and equal laws which its subjects can fully accept as part of their mode of life. (17)

He cites the cases of France and Spain. The nationhood of France owes its origin to the despotic rule of Charles V. Similarly, Philip II united the divided states of Spain into a real nation. The British domination over India for centuries inspired Indians to create a strong sense of nationhood. Moreover, the political unity of India brought about by the colonial power under one administration generated a sense of national unity.

In the modern times a community of economic interest as a controlling factor has contributed to the building of nations. The fiscal policy of a government may help to strengthen national unity but it is a less important factor. Ramsay Muir voices the same type of concern when he points out a common tradition as another factor that constitutes a nation:

> But it is probable that the most potent of all (nation building factors), the one indispensable factor which must be present, whatever else be lacking, is the possession of a common tradition, a memory of sufferings endured and victories own in common, expressed in song and legend, in the dear names of great personalities that seem to embody in themselves the character and ideals of the nation, in the

names also of sacred places wherein the national memory is enshrined. (18)

So, heroic achievements, heroically achieved, agonies courageously endured awaken the spirit of nationhood. No one contributes more to the patriotism of a country as its conqueror who by trying to destroy the nation gives an opportunity to the conquered people to ignite the flame of nationalism, by arousing its indefatigable spirit of patriotism. Ramsay Muir cites the case of the inextinguishable fire of German patriotism which was lit by the tortuous tyranny of Napoleon.

Geography plays an important part in the formation of nations. Rivers and mountains help in demarcating natural boundaries. But all mountains and rivers cannot make division of states. It is neither soil nor race that makes a nation. Military strength also cannot constitute a nation; otherwise, there would be unending wars in our globe. Nothing material suffices to constitute a nation. We come to a discussion in which we find no infallible test to what constitutes a nation: no single factor, such as geographical unity, race, language, religion, any common body of custom, or community of economic interest, seems to be indispensable to nationhood. Each nation in order to prove its nationhood most often fights for it against hostile forces. A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Race, language, material interest, religious affinities, geography, and military strength are not adequate for the creation of such a spiritual principle. Two things constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One is the possession of a common rich legacy of memories; and the other is its present day consent of the people – the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage. Homi K. Bhava elaborates the spiritual principle in *Nation and Narrations* (2010) that determines a nation in its own way:

> A heroic past, great men, glory, this is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea. To have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present; to have performed good deeds together, to wish to perform still more – these are the essential conditions for being a people. (19)

A nation, points out Bhabha, is the culmination of long past endeavours, sacrifice and devotion. Psychologically, one loves the memory of having suffered, enjoyed, sacrificed and hoped together to which he has consented. Suffering in group cements the ties of nationhood in the people more than joy does. So far as memories are concerned grief is much longer lasting than triumph. A nation has no more interest in annexing or holding on to a country against its will. To understand the nation-centredness of the post-world war, Homi K. Bhabha lends support to the following idea of Foucault:

> The nation is precisely what Foucault has called a 'discursive formation' – not simply an allegory or imaginative vision but a gestative political

structure which the Third World artist is consciously building or suffering the lack of it. (46-7)

There is no 'scientific means' of establishing what all nations have in common. The treatment of nationalism as a secular concept in the hand of Partha Chatterjee takes a different turn from the spiritual aspect of nationalism in Sri Aurobindo. For the latter, nationalism is not a political programme: "Nationalism is a religion that has come from God". Giving a spiritual interpretation of Nationalism, in a lecture delivered to a large gathering at Mahajan Wadi, Bombay, on 19th January 1908, Sri Aurobindo prophesied that people of India are the instruments of God who will spread Nationalism to every nook and corner of India. In an article "Spirituality and Nationalism" he spells out the spiritual mission of India. He claims that the East alone has the truth of the secret of spirituality. The East alone can teach the West to save mankind. India has been the workshop of various spiritual experiments. The perfect expression of Hindu spirituality is the signal of the resurgence of India.

Sri Aurobindo's (1972) insistence on God to arouse the religious sentiments helped to strengthen people's nationalistic feeling in the first decade of twentieth century in Bengal during the struggle for freedom from colonial rule. A foreign power cannot permanently crush the spirit of nationalism in a subject people. To arouse the supine consciousness of people who were disunited, Sri Aurobindo declares in the *Bande Mataram* (1972) that nationalism survives in the strength of God, so it has not been crushed. He assures the hesitant mass that whatever weapons are used against nationalism, the spirit of people cannot easily be crushed:

> Nationalism is immortal... because it is no human thing, it is God who is working in Bengal. God cannot be killed, God cannot be sent to jail...It is God that is born in you? ...You are merely instruments of God for the work of the Almighty. (653)

The common mass plays a major role in the spread of nationalism. The cosmopolitan upper classes and intellectuals are easily influenced by foreign ideas and cultures. The 'folk', the 'plebeians' and the working class become the important component of a nation. Bruce King in *The New English Literature* (1980) gives priority to rural culture in the treatment of nationalism:

> Nationalism is an urban movement which identifies with the rural areas as a source of authenticity, finding in the 'folk' the attitudes, beliefs, customs and language to create a sense of national unity among people who have other loyalties. Nationalism aims at ...rejection of cosmopolitan upper classes, intellectuals and others likely to be influenced by foreign ideas. (42)

The 'folk', the plebeians', the people, the 'working classes' have become important components in the treatment of nation. The plebeian

authenticity has been a feature of English literature in the rise of modern nationalism in Europe.

In a lecture, 'What is a nation?' delivered at the Sorbonne in 1882, Ernest Renan advances the 'voluntaristic' argument in the formation of a nation. His main purpose in this lecture is to deny any naturalistic determinism of the boundaries of nations: these are not dictated by language, geography, race, religion, or anything else. He clearly dislikes the spectacle of nineteenth-century ethnographers as proponents of national claims and expansion. Nations are made by human will. Ernest Gellner shows that the will of people creates nationalism: "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not exist" (qtd. in Anderson 15). So, a large aggregate of men, healthy in mind and warm of heart create a moral atmosphere in which a nation exists.

In the context of anti-colonial resistance nationalism is invented by the subject people where it does not exist as in African and Asian countries. Frantz Fanon in his essay on "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness" in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) draws a clear distinction between two kinds of nationalist ideology in the context of anti-colonial struggle. One type is the bourgeois nationalism and the other is liberationist, anti-imperialism, or nationalist internationalism. The bourgeois nationalism represents the interests and the goal of attainment of nationhood through capture and subsequent appropriation of the colonial state. The second type of nationalism operated in the Algerian freedom struggle by the Front de Liberation Nationale, the firebrand anti-colonial resistance movement for whose cause Fanon vouchsafed his heartfelt support.

Fanon enumerates the drawbacks of 'bourgeois nationalism', which in his opinion is good for nothing: "It is solely directed to transfer into native hands - the hands of the nationalists – those unfair advantages which are the legacy of the colonial period" (152). In the context of the postcolonial struggle for freedom Fanon issues a strong warning that if after independence of the country, leadership comes to the hands of the elite class 'the whole momentum of the struggle for liberation may be jeopardized'. He, therefore, admonishes the radical anti-colonists to oppose tooth and nail the bourgeois nationalism as vehemently as they opposed imperialism. Fanon advances his arguments against the rule of the middle class:

> In the underdeveloped countries, the bourgeoisie should not be allowed to find the conditions necessary for its existence and growth. In other words, the combined efforts of the mass led by a party and of intellectuals who are highly conscious and armed with revolutionary principles ought to bar the way to this useless and harmful middle class. (174-5)

In the whirlpool of liberation movement the consciousness of both intellectuals and masses steadily undergoes continual transformation. A nationalist force is transformed through the creation of a national consciousness that aims at national liberation. The movement for liberation cannot be extirpated by any local politics of the people. It is the working mass, the peasants, who play a decisive role in strengthening their political awareness by assimilating the principles of national and social revolutions. They provide the principal force behind the liberation movement.

There has been an encounter between nationalist consciousnesses with post-enlightenment rationalist thought. Modern European culture claimed superiority over the Eastern culture as it was well equipped to subject the countries of the East to poverty and political dominance. But the nationalists argue that backwardness can be changed by a nation collectively by adopting modern attributes of European culture. They point out that the superiority of the European culture lies in its materiality of culture advanced by the progress of science and technology. They believe that progress can be achieved by combining superior qualities of the Western culture with the spiritual wealth of the East. Such an ideal can be materialised by adopting an elitist programme.

Colonized intellectuals shrink away from Western culture in their passionate search for national culture which existed in the pre-colonial era. They discover that there is nothing to be ashamed of in their past. The claim to a national culture rehabilitates the nation and justifies the hopes of a future national culture. The idea of 'National Culture' can best be summed in the words of Frantz Fanon:

> A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence. (155)

To fight for national culture, amounts, in the first place, to fight for the liberation of the nation from imperial dominance which assumes the form of a popular struggle. However, Fanon as a theorist warns against the pitfalls of national consciousness. The national bourgeoisie, while using nationalism to maintain its own power, demonstrates the danger of appropriating the hegemonic control of the imperial power which it had vowed to oppose. Nationalism sets out to exercise its freedom from European domination. But it degenerated in post-colonial societies into a 'hegemonic and monologic status'.

Colonialism is entrenched on the basis of cultural emasculation of the subject people. So the struggle for national liberation becomes an act of cultural resistance as its object is the 'freedom of a society and its values from foreign dominations'. The great force of culture derives its ability to reflect history as it can influence the relationship of people with the society since a culture has a mass character.

Works Cited

Anderson, Benedict *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* London: Verso and New Left Books, 1983. Print.

Bernard, F. M. Ed. *J. G. Herder on Social and Political Culture.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969. Print.

Bhava, Homi K. Ed. *Nation and Narrations.* 1990. London: Routledge, , 2010. Print.

Brennan, Timothy. "The National Longing for Form". *Nations and Narrations.* Ed. Homi K. Bhava. London: Routledge, 1990. 44 – 70. Print.

Chatterjee, Partha.. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World.* 1986. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. Print.

Fanon, Frantz. 1961. *The Wretched of the Earth.* Trans. Constance Farrington. New York: Grove Press, 1968. Print.

Forster, Michael. Ed. *J. G. Herder's Philosophical Writings.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Print.

Gellner, Ernest. 1996. *Nations and Nationalism.* Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.Print.

Hobsbawm, *E. J. Nations and Nationalism Since 1780.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Print.

Kedourie, Elie. "Introduction" . *Nationalism in Asia and Africa.* London: Weidenfold and Nicolson, 1970. Print.

King, Bruce. *The New English Literature.* London: Macmillan, 1980. Print.

Kohn, Hans. *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History.* New York and Cincinnati: Van Nostrand Company, 1965.Print.

Muir, Ramsay. *Nationalism & AMP Internationalism; The Culmination of Modern History.* 1917. Boston: Houghton,General Books, n.d.. Print.

Orwell, George. "Notes on Nationalism" .*Such, Such Were the Joys.* New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1953.Print.

Plamenatz, John, "Two types of Nationalism". *Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of an Idea.* Ed. Eugene Kamennka. London: Edward Arnold, 1976, 23- 36.Print.

Renan, Ernest. "What is a Nation?" *Nation and Narrations.* Ed. Homi K. Bhava. London; Routledge, 1990, 8 – 22. Print.

Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism.* London: Chatto Windus, 1993. Print

Smith, Anthony D. *Theories of Nationalism.* London: Duckworth, 1971. Print

Sri Aurobindo, 1972. *Bande Mataram, Early Political Writings,* Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1997. Print

■■

THE WASTELAND: AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF THE POETIC SELF

Sanjeev K Munda

The Wasteland appeared in 1922 as the most influential poem. It was believed by many that Eliot projected a sense of the disintegration of life, spiritual sterility and moral emptiness of the modern age. *The Wasteland* was used as a metaphor for the modern world in which the inhabitants and the protagonist are shown as experiencing the meaninglessness of their existence due to the loss of spiritual faith. The poem depicts the modern predicament, the collapse of the values, and the crisis in the culture of a whole generation of people. Eliot himself wrote in his note to *The Wasteland* that Tiresias is the most significant character. He further opined that just as the one–eyed merchant...melts into the Phonecian Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand, Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem. Understanding Tiresias is understanding the substance of the poem." (*Collected Poems* 72)

Tiresias has generally been interpreted as the extension of Gerontion as the persona, through whom the emotion and experience have been objectified. Eliot tries on a variety of selves in his quest for self-knowledge, among whom Tiresias certainly is 'the most important personage' in *The Wasteland* (*WLF* 148). Given the authority his famous impersonal theory has acquired, it is quite obvious to interpret the persona, the images, the symbols and dramatization of emotions in *The Waste Land* from the point of view of Tiresias. However, this mode of interpretation has been challenged by James E. Miller in his book *T.S. Eliot's Personal Waste Land Exorcism of the Demons* (1977). He presents a radical view that The Wasteland is an autobiography, and this idea is reflected in the title of the book. E.Miller,Jr. opines that *The Waste Land* is Eliot's *in memoriam* for Jean Verdenal, a French student, who lived with Eliot at the same boarding house ,and who was killed in the battle of Dardanelles in 1915(465-75).

In 1971, Eliot's widow Valerie Eliot edited and published the manuscript version under the title *T.S. Eliot, The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts*. She made an observation thus:

> Various critics have done me the honour to interpret the poem in terms of criticism of the contemporary world, have considered it indeed, as an important bit of social criticism. To me it was only the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life; it is just a piece of rhythmic grumbling. (*WLF* 1)

In 1931, in *Thoughts After Lambeth*, Eliot had commented:

> When I wrote a poem called *The Waste Land* some of the more approving critics said that I had expressed the 'disillusionment of a generation', which is nonsense. I may have expressed for them their own illusion of being disillusioned, but that did not form part of my intention. (*SE* 324)

In 1951, while delivering the lecture 'Virgil and the Christian World' Eliot stated:

> A poet may believe that he is expressing only his private experience; his lines may be for him only a means of talking about himself without giving himself away; yet for his readers what he has written may come to be expressing both of their own secret feelings and of the exultation or despair of a generation. He need not know what his poetry will come to mean to others; and a prophet need not understand the meaning of his prophetic utterance. (137)

In all these statements, whether directly or indirectly, Eliot emphasized the personal matter that was incorporated into the poem. At the same time he was astonished at the way the poem came to be read as a public statement about the modern world. The statement pointed to the fact that Eliot believed he was expressing only his "private experience" in *The Waste Land*. Moreover, in reply to Cleanth Brook's letter he remarked:

> [but]actually this particular passage approximates more closely to a reflection of a personal experience of my own than anything else, and indeed is as nearly as I could remember a verbatim report (of the personal experience). (Brooks *TWLPD* 321)

Many critics have attempted traditional reading in terms of the fact that *The Waste Land* expressed the predicament of the whole generation. But there are some critics who made a partial attempt to define the personal experience of the poem, taking the clue from the manuscript. A Canadian Professor, John Peter, published 'A New Interpretation of *The Waste Land*' in the July 1952 issue of the British journal *Essays in Criticism*.(242-66). Peter interpreted the poem as a dramatic representation of the speakers falling in love with a "young man who afterwards met his death" (12) by drowning. Of course this article did not present the view that Eliot was the speaker. But Eliot's lawyers reported to Peter that their client had read his article with "amazement and disgust" and said it was "absurd" and "completely erroneous"(p.173).These lawyers threatened to file a law suit against Peter and the editor of *Essays in Criticism*. Peter agreed to withdraw the entire article and every thing disappeared from public view.

Peter again published the article with a long Postscript in April 1969 in *Essays and Criticism*. In this article he confirmed the biographical interpretation. The fourth section of *The Waste Land* appeared under the subtitle 'Death by Water' in which Phlebas, the Phoenician sailor, is drowned in the sea. In this context, 'Death by Water' may be read as an elegy, an

utterance of the private self of the poet. According to Peter, Phlebas is no other than his cousin. Miller says:

> In a seemingly sudden civil ceremony on 26 June 1915, Eliot married Vivienne Haigh-Wood in Hampstead, a marriage "encouraged" (Valerie Eliot indicates) by Ezra Pound. We may assume that this marriage took place after Eliot learned of Verdenal's death in the Dardanelles. The puzzling aspects of this marriage are best suggested in a letter written by Bertrand Russell in July 1915, only a month or so after the marriage:" I dined with my Harvard pupil,[T.S.] Eliot, and his bride...She is light, a little vulgar, adventurous, full of life-an artist I think he said...He is exquisite and listless ;she says she married him to stimulate him, but finds she can't do it. Obviously he married in order to be stimulated. I think she will soon be tired of him. (WF 21-22)

Both Peter's article and the facsimile manuscript provided sufficient material to James E. Miller to write his book T.S. *Eliot's Personal Wasteland: Exorcism of the Demons*. When this book was published by Miller, there was a harsh criticism. For example, Christopher Butler denounced *The Homosexual Interpretation of Eliot's Life and Work* in *Times Supplement* of October 28, 1977. In his review, for example, Robert Langbaum wrote :

> His interest in Eliot's life is salutary, since it can only lead to renewed interest in his poetry. But Miller's book shows the danger of pursuing biographical speculation without more information than we now have. We need Mrs. Eliot's forthcoming edition of letters, the first volume of which, Miller says, will contain letters of Verdenal. We also need a responsible biography based on all the available documents. (*The New York Times Review* 15)

Moreover, he emphasized that Miller's book serves as a correction to the monumental figures Eliot cut in his later years. But he also remarked that a responsible biography was to be based on further information, particularly an edition of the letters.

Although Miller's book has been controversial to some extent and has raised debate among the scholars, it cannot be denied that the biography of the author may be read as a guide to the understanding of his poetic experience. In this context , Tiresias the persona of *The Waste Land* is an objective representation of the autobiography of the poetic self.

N. Anne C. Bolgan, in her famous book *What the Thunder has Said* interprets that Tiresias cannot be dissociated from Fisher King or from the Grail Questor or from T.S.Eliot, the poet. Similarly, G.S. Frazer remarks *The Waste Land* expresses poignantly a sense of desperation the poet suffered and age's lack of a positive, spiritual faith. The feeling of personal anguish and dereliction of menace and sterility everywhere is at the root of *The*

Waste Land. He further remarks that the brilliant impersonality of technique nevertheless merely marks a growingly intense personal distress. In Frazer's view the thematic pattern of the poem and its vivid topicality, its presentation of the London scene perhaps disguised a deep complex of personal feelings in the poet – disgust, desperation and a temporary withdrawal from life. *The Waste Land* certainly looks today a more personal and more romantic poem than it did when it first came out.

It seems that various layers of meanings and association of ideas might be more revealed if the poem is studied from the point of view of the Eliot's biography. Miller's book *T.S. Eliot's The Personal Waste Land* has certainly provoked us to explore other details with regard to the connection between biography and the poems.

Works Cited

Anne C. Bolgan, *What The Thunder Said: A Retrospective Essay on the Making of the The Waste Land* (Montreal: Queen's University Press, 1973. Print.

Cleanth Brooks. 'The Waste Land: Critique of the Myth'. *Modern Poetry and Tradition.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939. 136-72. Print.

Eliot, T. S. *Selected Essays*. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1963. Print.

Eliot, T. S. *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound.* Ed.Valerie Eliot. London: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1971.Print.

Eliot, T.S. *Collected Poems 1909-1962* . Harcourt, Brace& World, Inc, 1962. 72. Print.

Gallup, Donald. *T.S.Eliot: A Bibliography*. New York:Hancout,Brace & World,Inc.,1953.Print.

Langbaum, Robert. *The New York Times Book Review*, April 17(1977):15. Web.

Miller, James E Jr.. *T .S . Eliot's Personal Waste Land: Exorcism of the Demons.* Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977. Print.

Peter, John. 'A New Interpretation of *The Waste Land*'. *Essays in Criticism* (July 2,1952) : .242-66. Print.

Watson, George. 'Quest or a Frenchman'. *Sewanee Review*, LXXXIV (Summer 1976): 465-75.Print.

SPECIAL FEATURE-I

END OF THE 'GRAND TEXT':* TOWRDS A COMMONWEALTH OF TEXTS

Saswat S. Das

Distinguished makers of American destiny, past and present, members of a great community that has withstood the ravages of history, members of faculty and students who live and work in this Commonwealth of shared values, ladies and gentlemen. Permit me to convey to you the greetings of the faculty and students of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur and the love of the people of India for your great nation and for the great institutions you have built.

Standing here, I am overwhelmed by history. The valiant Virginians were among the leaders of the American Revolution. Thomas Jefferson, a Virginian, was the primary author of the Declaration of Independence while George Washington assumed command of the Armies. It was at Yorktown that the British Armies were forced to surrender on October 18, 1781 leading to the treaty of Paris of 1783, which recognized the Independence of the American Colony. Virginia continued its national glory in the following decades furnishing four of America's first five Presidents, among them Thomas Jefferson and James Madison being pre-eminent. Much of the intellectual ferment out of which the basic political institutions of the young American nation were shaped, happened here. Yet it is Virginia, which became the Chief battleground of the Civil War, it ceded from the Union in 1861 and was readmitted in 1870. Virginia of course escaped much of the punishments that Reconstruction inflicted on other States, but its loss of thousands of young men remained irreparable. But then history heals its wounds by piling upon them layers and layers of texts, and when it still hurts; it either rewrites the texts or writes new ones on the old. In any case, the marks of the wounds remain. Two thousand years after Christ, we can still see them. Ours is a wounded civilization.

When I speak as an Indian to a Virginian American, I am overwhelmed by this shared past of our civilization. We both have our colonial pasts. You have coped with your past by rewriting your text. We are in the process of writing new ones over the old. The term postcolonial, without a hyphen, that came to be used in the intellectual discourses is in fact a name given to the process of textualisation of civilization. It is an intellectual strategy to relate our present to the past with the hope that the open-ended quest

***This essay is the transcript of a lecture Saswat Das delivered at the Scott House, Virginia Commonwealth University, U.S.A., on April 7, 2007.**

of human progress would draw from its past, without being its repository of loss. The substance of the matter is 'Text'. But then Postmodernism is arrayed against Postcolonialism on this score. Let us begin by examining the battlefield: the terrain of contest between Colonial and Postcolonial and between Postcolonial and Postmodern.

Post-colonial literature, to me, means textualised writing which consciously tries to resist and transform the colonial structures embedded within the very unconscious of the people of the nations the colonial past. These structures had grown out of colonial texts disseminated amongst the natives in order to make them realize and relate to an identity fashioned in the colonizing nations.

The colonial texts worked by a strategy of marginalization. This strategy aimed at positioning the natives far from the narrative space of the text dominated by the colonizer. The position of the native in the text was indicative of his inferior ontology. These texts, therefore, did not register the oppositional voices of the natives. However, they did occasionally make the native speak from the background or from the footnotes to reassert and legitimize the superiority of the colonizer. The native/indigenous writers, the makers of insurgent literature during the freedom struggle, grappled with these structures in their texts based on the valorization of pre-colonial history, myth and literature. Their texts, which were mainly rewritings of colonial texts, reversed the binaries and turned upside down the dangerous little hierarchies that established their inferiority. The process of reversal, complex as it was, gave shape to new biases subsumed within anti-authoritarian movements around the world. These texts built on the counter- strategy of a desire to establish the superiority of the native and the entire pre-colonial civilization chose to live in the past, foreclosing the possibility of its ever emerging into the present or the future. Present would be synonymous with compliance and future would be nowhere. In this sense, they were anti-teleological, non progressive and non-linear, attributes that went against the very essence of Enlightenment that had propelled the colonial desiring machines into action. However, their non-compliance with history and negotiation with forces moving backwards in time to explore the imaginary origin, made them look static to readers inclined to re-invent themselves in present.

The stage was set for the arrival of the postcolonial text. The postcolonial texts were different. They did not wish to be seen as counterpoints. For them resistance did not mean building a strong line of defense. Rather it was a mediating act, which originated out of a realization that colonial structures were indispensable, for they encapsulated in them the whole civilization of Europe. This realization made the postcolonial writer assimilate and transform these structures. The underlying motive was to construct textual discourses for nations to find their voices and for

securing places in the history of the civilization. The process of assimilation and transformation, however, led these writers into realizing the significance of the sites of cultural-in-betweenness, sites that produced a plethora of creative outbursts and a new kind of aesthetics where the possibilities of creation through negotiation with a wide range of significations across cultural boundaries existed. The realization of multiple possibilities triggered off by creative alliances within the interesting borderlines of a global order, made the postcolonial writers feel the need to redefine the limits of their production sites. The need was fulfilled through ceaseless negotiations with and assimilations of multiple choices. Postcolonial texts, in this sense, had become truly cosmopolitan. They had broadened their narrative space to take in everything that the world offered through national borders. They were not seen merely as transforming agents. They were seen as initiators of many new formations. As a result of over stretching the textual borders gave in and postcolonial texts lost their status. They merged awkwardly with the postmodern, a concept that had its origin in the despair and the nullity of the postwar years of Europe and America, which culminated eventually into an era of unmatched prosperity. As the fruits of stupendous scientific and technological advancement of this era fell around the world, they initiated a process that we know as globalization.

Postmodernism in fact mirrored the process of globalization that led to the re-production of cultural and social space that undermined stratifications, enabled homogeneity of tastes and styles, challenged the underlying solidity of our lives and triggered off a process of commodification that ironically fixed a price tag on the process itself. That created 'non-places'. The best examples of such wide-ranging changes can be found in the nearest Departmental Stores, the non-places that enabled a kind of reconciliation between the conflicting elements of time and value. The reconciliation was achieved through a strategy of de-essentialization, a strategy that aimed to objectify our whole existence. In other words, the meanings and values that determined our status as pure beings were seen as objects available for commerce. As a result, history and culture were placed among objects meant to be consumed and relegated to background.

Postmodernism theorized this trend and registered its effects in varied aspects of our life. Even writing as a concept underwent drastic changes. It was re-conceptualized as free and radically dissipative, poised to break new grounds. Postmodern writing was to interrogate and abandon the stable anchoring points of civilization that had given it a differential status and vital linkages with nation's past and history. However, for postcolonial texts, texts that emerged from nations with colonial past, the postmodern trend was tempting, and yet admittedly self-destructive.

Any alliance with global trends of postmodernism meant that texts

aim only at providing creative pleasure and satisfaction. Texts, if at all, would then become objects that are groundless, bottomless, and severed from everything that gave them stability and strength to hold on to their ground in a global world where change was permanent. The new global status that the postcolonial texts gained for themselves became the very cause of their unbecoming. Possibilities multiplied rapidly as postcolonial texts discovered new frontiers but through a writing that posed a threat to its core rooted deep in the past of nations. Postmodern writing engaged with past, perhaps, more frequently than postcolonial writing did. However, these were engagements bordering on irony whose propose was subversion. As the postmodernists do not believe in past, real and concrete, they treat it like commodity available for consumption. In other words, past existed as an available absence, an absence, which could be imagined in multiple ways. It was something that one could toy with, alter and parody. This was in absolute contrast to writing that rendered past as the most parodied phase to which one returned for providing stability and fixity to his life stretched in all possible directions.

Unable to ward off new dangers manifested in postmodern writing, postcolonial texts arrived at a stage of renewal. With the passage of time, writers from nations with a colonial pasts, aimed at resuscitating texts that celebrated writing only to perish untimely. Texts revealing postmodern tendencies were replaced by a new kind of text that subjected writing to mild and useful restraint. The challenge for the writers from developing nations was to invent texts that could represent their nation while remaining open to ideas across the borders. This led to the recognition of indigenous texts that were shades different from the postcolonial and the native texts valorized during the early phase of decolonization. These indigenous texts, did not reverse the binaries that the 'colonized' had at the receiving end, nor did they, attempt to situate themselves within the condition of post-modernity. Theses texts depicted 'nation' as the central organizing principle, and yet remained open to stylistic postmodern innovations. In the indigenous texts, experimentations were carried out to analyze the traits that constituted the idea of nationhood. Past and history were not simply put forward as trophies to foreground a nation's uniqueness as in the case of resistance-texts. Postcolonial indigenous texts displayed their firm belief in the idea that there was something stable and permanent in our lives, something that did not succumb to the global forces. Nor did they feel any need to transform themselves. That 'something' made the indigenous postcolonials respond to varied situations in ways that the postmoderns could not fathom. There were ceaseless experimentations in the indigenous texts to arrive at that permanent core, that unique indigenous sensibility. As a result texts lived and writing flourished not by erasing the contours of nations or spatial-temporal configurations that aided their production. In contrast, postmodern texts have degenerated into parody of texts; they celebrated writing only to subvert it. Postmodern writing truly was and

still is an example of subversive writing that glides over nation, region, history, individuality and location through a bizarre mix or remix of techniques and ideas that flit through non-palpable sites of perpetual interrogation.

Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* may seem to be a piece of subversive writing, forcefully creative yet dangerously unreliable, intensely revelatory yet perversely inclined toward its own demise, erasing and demolishing every meaningful site in the text. Though one detects, "flickers of meaning" in Conrad's writing, momentarily lighting up reader's passage into the inner station, their significance lies in deluding us into oppressive darkness. However, this is not what Achebe thought while accusing Conrad of racism. He took those flickers for vivid sparks, illuminating the text, giving him enough reason to doubt and interrogate the 'unspeakable'. Writing after hundred years of the publication of *Heart of Darkness*, Achebe was fully aware of his role and his position in time. As a writer, he realized his significance in retrieving and conjoining bits and pieces of the African history lying half-effaced within the debris of the colonial structures.

Achebe's response to Conrad's text was indicative of his resolution to fashion history and his way of coming to terms with the postcolonial moment. His accusation of Conrad as a racist is a product of that moment enabling him to see the unspeakable in Conrad's text. Moreover, it was Achebe's resolve to make a perfect beginning while creating a suitable history for the Africans that made him choose a text built on nullity and void, a text that offered him clear grounds, un-spoilt locations and a sense of having returned to the state of purity Achebe sensed in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* what he wanted to sense: a fixation on blackness, a deliberate portrayal of Africans as sub-human and a wish to keep them permanently frozen in the state of pre-history. In fact, these became the very basis of his writing *Things Fall Apart* as a turning point, a stage where the whole history of Africa had gathered to make a new beginning. The objective that Achebe wished to achieve through his narrative was exactly the opposite of *Things Fall Apart*. It seemed to be everything that Marlow was not: a hero with tragic flaws and attributes that make up humanity. These flaws and attributes were set against the degenerative traits paraded in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as manifestations of evil seducing a portion of humanity toward its own demise. As a counterpoint, *Things Fall Apart*, with its worlds full of coherent and stable structures, was opposed to the fluidity and instability of the Conradian universe. The society one viewed in *Things Fall Apart* was only postcolonial by name, otherwise it was a society like ours: vibrant, dynamic, artistic, though flawed. It had men and women, rituals and conflicts that eventually made it vulnerable to the colonial forces.

Things Fall Apart as a counterpoint did not merely reverse the binaries set up in a typical colonial text. It went a step further and made the

colonized share the flaws and forebodings of the colonizers. Okonkwo was egoistic, impetuous and arrogant; his father was cowardly and lazy, Okoye was money-minded and talkative while Umoufia as a whole nurtured the fear of darkness and evil-spirits.

Achebe was not only rewriting Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and the past of Africa but was creating a new text after erasing Conrad that could manage to hold writing as civilization. With his writing, purposeful and organized, Achebe wished to release his fellowmen from the lack of ontology into the plenitude of civilizational metaphysics. Thus, we witness in *Things Fall Apart* a counterpoint not merely in terms of ideas, but in terms of writing as well. The features of Achebe's writing were clearly opposed to those of Conrad's. Achebe had purposefulness, clarity and brevity conspicuously absent in Conrad. The Conradian text rushed towards its own evanescence. While Conrad went on postponing the true meaning of his design until the end, Achebe, from the very beginning, registered his African presence as the true meaning of his design in a propitious historical moment. Writings of Achebe and Conrad are, indeed, reflections of the two different historical occasions. While Conrad was writing in an era of introspection caused by a relentless pursuit of imperial colonial ambition, Achebe was writing in an era crowded with moments of self-reclamation. Therefore, the postponement of meaning in Conrad's text needs to be examined in the context of his unenviable position where he had to choose between nature and civilization. Achebe had no such problem. Conrad had to finally choose empire as the site of civilization. Achebe had his site readied up by Conrad. One cannot therefore really question the counterpoint status of Achebe's text. In fact, the genesis of Achebe's writing was laid in the time that separated it from the text of Conrad. In this sense, all African texts were counterpoints of those composed during colonization; almost all of them affirmed and repaired the battered subjectivity of the Africans while narrating their involvement in the presence.

Achebe's response to Conrad could be product of his deconstructive reading that forcefully teased out meanings from a text that finally led to their undoing. Achebe, it is well known, was severely disappointed with certain passages in Conrad's text, passage that was deeply disturbing in harboring racial prejudices of the colonizers. These passages, no doubt, perpetuated binaries leading the reader to view of the text as a contested site. Yet they cannot be understood in isolation. One may understand them in terms of their linkages with and dependence upon the concomitant lines and passages. Surprisingly, in *Heart of Darkness* passages hardly ever ensure the release of meanings. The moment one tries to hold them captive, they pale into significance by the magic current of phrases, passages and lies that undercut each other. Moreover, the fluidity of colonial text is corroborated by the use of parody and irony that subverts the real. It is

even more interesting to mark the representation of nature in the text as an alternative to civilization. Conrad sets it up like a wall obstructing one's view of the real. Furthermore, he presents nature in the text only to mock civilized lives whose only significance rests in 'colonizing'. So, Conrad had to choose 'Empire' over' nature'. Marlow returns to the "whited sepulcher' to carry on with the text of civilization as written by the Empire. In Conrad's text, words prevail. They control men and their actions, and by constantly failing to add up; they ensure the collapse of interiority. Even the journey of the characters into the inner station is not a journey beyond text. Rather it is a journey into the textual unconscious. The position of Kurtz in the text of the central metaphor cancels the possibility of one's arrival into trans-textual sites.

In the view of this, it will be equally interesting to mark how Conrad shapes subjectivity, particularly the subjectivity of the colonized other. While the subjectivity of the colonizer lies enmeshed with the words and sentences that fail to add up into meaningful wholes, the creation of the subjectivity of the other takes place beyond text. We witness him as a creature of pure instincts and his responses do not bear the mark of corruption. His regression into the state of prehistory, in fact, redeems him:

> *Now and then, a boat from the shore gave one momentary contact with reality. It was paddled by black fellows. You could see them afar the white of their eyeballs glistening. They shouted, sang; their bodies streamed with perspiration; they had faces like grotesque masks-these chaps; but they had, bone, muscle, a wild vitality, and intense energy of movement, that was as natural and true as the surf along their coast*

What seems to be an exercise in voyeurism is in fact Conrad's way of reasserting the alien subjectivity, grotesque yet true. Conrad inspects and examines the colonized bodies, not to claim them as trophies for exhibition, but to stress the underlying solidity of their lives. By perceiving the colonized selves as stable, unified, coherent wholes and distancing them, Conrad seems to be giving shape to the final irony of his text directed at exposing its own limitations as a mediating agent. The horror waiting to reveal itself toward the end of the narrative is a powerful manifestation of this irony that reasserts the impossibility of the un-hyphenated existence in the textual world. To deny speech to the colonized is Conrad's way of denying him an entry into the textual world that dehumanizes and corrupts, a way of securing his place in the unconscious realm, the surreal domain in which the text-men lose their way. True, the colonized appear nowhere in the text as conscious subjects responsible for their actions, but then consciousness is an abominable word in the Conradian universe. To gain consciousness is a mark of one's arrival in the textual world. Therefore, the reduction of the colonized to shapes, forms, angles and attitude does not obliterate them. The colonized survives on all fours. Oppression makes

their survival resemble a nightmare, but then the comfort of dreaming is also allowed to none. Achebe views colonized existence as divested of all meanings. Yet in the Conradian universe meanings are found strewn across silences, gaps and nothingness. In this sense, the colonized are closer to meanings while the colonizers despite their words, things and fullness fail to make sense of their surrounding. In *Heart of Darkness* the colonizers are parodies of their real selves. Lacking muscle, bone and vitality, they resemble dummies. Marlow respects the chief accountant only to find him resembling a hairdresser's dummy. His only reality is his appearance: starched collar, white cuffs, snowy trousers, a clean necktie and varnished boots. Trappings of appearance are the essential components of his ontology, the achievements of his character, his backbone. We mark here a crucial difference between the subjectivity of the colonizer and colonized. The subjectivity of the colonized is intact yet bound in chains, but the colonizer exists as an assured being. There is something metaphysical about his suffering. While the colonized have regressed into the state of animals, attaining innocence and harmony, the dehumanization of the colonizers is absolute and final. For the accountant the groan of a sick man is distractive. It prevents him from making the right entries. The colonizers are tougher, but that is what real material are like: 'tough, durable, meaningless and devoid of entrails. Ironically, for the colonial agents, salvation lies in their shape of being consumed by the objects. The agents need rivets not only to repair the steamboat but also to repair their fragmented selves. Moreover, their sole dependence on the fineries of civilization divests their lives of any grand purpose. The agents conceive elevation of self and progress of humankind in terms of the knowledge gained from the grand text of civilization. Surprisingly, text determines their faltering steps into the wilderness. Their responses are textbook responses. They view fright, terror, mystery, beauty and enlightenment in the terms of texts. The rolling of drums and wilderness appear meaningless to them. They are, indeed, not a part of their education or their belief and faith brought upon the principles of Enlightenment. Their education lies in glorifying matter. It propels them towards gold, steel and ivory, objects that finally consume them. Kurtz is their essence, their epitome.

In the failure of Kurtz lies the failure of the grand text of civilization. The essence of Kurtz is the finest rhetoric of civilization, the rhetoric that unmakes him. This, in fact, is the horrors of horrors: the finest gift of civilization turns out to be its worst curse. The limits of language mar Kurtz. He withers as he spends every bit of his real self: the grand lexicon, the encyclopedia. A life wasted in words. Our recognition of him as a mere voice marks the end of his wordy existence. His final resting place: the muddy hole. This reactivates the conflict between a wordy civilization and a speechless nature. *Heart of Darkness*, in this sense, finds its own counter narrative in the colonized, as a construct of nature. Man's existence beyond the text as a potent force is a realization that no text can embody

without falling apart. The heart of darkness in question is then bound to fall apart: the death of a text is the end of civilization. Conrad, however, does not let this happen. He goes on overdrive to devise a strategy that would render the colonized real but ugly; a truth no one would like to meet. This is perhaps the only way Conrad could keep the structures of civilization intact. Conrad's strategy can be clearly seen in the return of Marlow to the 'whited sepulcher'. The 'whited sepulcher' is the colonizer's civilization built as a text.

For Marlow, knowing the truth is more significant than meeting it. Marlow knows what is what. And yet, he must make a choice by erasing the writing of nature on the palimpsest. The final resolution would lie in falling back on the wisdom gained from 'text'. Wisdom lies in continuing to live within the grand text as its inalienable part, as a tissue of textualities. Conrad the author and Marlow the narrator would like their audience to return to spaces they are familiar with, spaces within text, spaces in which they have learnt hard lessons of coping with their schizophrenia. Wisdom lies in knowing the truth of 'nature' and yet to choose 'civilization'. Between speechless forms and wordy existence, the latter is the inevitable choice.

Heart of Darkness, subverts its own texts, so that textuality can survive. While the readers are preparing themselves from the beginning to see the end of texts, Conrad as an author is devising strategies for their perpetuation. Conrad perhaps marks the failure of texts in creating men with entrails only to work out in the end the necessity of retaining them as the only alternative. This is where, Conrad, as a writer becomes vulnerable to the charges of Achebe. Had Conrad ended his *Heart of Darkness* at least announcing, if not celebrating, the futility of texts, there would have been no battle. Conrad that way could have pre-empted the counterpoint. But Conrad's decision to keep the text of the civilized and this speechlessness of the colonized at their respective places is what drew the battle line. Achebe takes on Conrad obviously for relegating the 'speechless' into oblivion, while valorizing the wordy existence of the colonizer in the interest of civilization. But then Achebe realizes the importance of text that Conrad renders futile yet accepts as indispensable. A 'text' is inevitable for the speechless too. For the speechless to speak he must own a 'text'. So, Achebe constructs a meta-text, complex and intriguing yet ready to offer what the colonized needed while making their entry into the world history, a ground to firmly stand on, a past about which they can dream, if not return. Achebe did not wish to see the colonized as an ugly reality. Rather he resolved to find a place for them in the inter-textual labyrinth.

The characters in *Things Fall Apart* do not construct the beginning of a civilization; rather they are expected to be seen firmly entrenched in a civilization of their own, in a text poised for renewal or for rewriting. Since no reassurance is possible, let there be overwriting. But let there be

a text. In fact, it was the realization of the indispensability of text that united Achebe and Conrad in the colonial-postcolonial battle field for text. Conrad as part of grand text, sought to perpetuate it even while exposing its failure. Achebe on his turn proposed as African text only to validate the existence of those given up as ugly and redundant, and also to mark their presence in history as conscious subjects. So, in the battle between colonial and the postcolonial, it is 'text' that won. More precisely, the 'texts' won, while 'the grand text' lost. And in that sense, one can say that Achebe as the maker of an African text won and Conrad as the apologist for the 'European grand text' lost. But then, no one in Conrad's place could have thought of repudiating the 'grand text'. The very fact that Conrad could render the 'grand text' futile at the height of its power makes his ultimate choice of the 'grand text' of European colonization, a choice made against sensibility and in favor of reason. That too under the duress of imperialism. Marlow returns to the 'whited sepulcher' not because he loves it, but because he knows no alternative. Conrad, through Marlow, left behind this message and Achebe knew it. Achebe knew that Conrad had left behind a blank page for him to write on. One hundred years after Conrad's when the alternative presented itself. Achebe picked up the opportunity and a mock battle ensured for 'texts', if not for grand texts. The result of the battle is known.

Now, is there a lesson in that battle that can inform us in advance of the result of the decisive last round being fought between postmodernism and postcolonialism? I think yes, there is a big lesson there. The earlier battle was fought between *a text* and *the text* . The current battle is being fought between *many texts* and *non-text*. The postcolonials stand for *many texts*; the postmodern stands for *no text*. I think – and I hope – I have succeeded in persuading you to agree that finally 'Textists' would win hands down over the 'non-textists' I imagine that the void left by the dismantling of the 'grand text' would be filed up by a 'Commonwealth of Texts'. Membership free. That is the civilization of future.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for your attention.

■■

SPECIAL FEATURE-II (BOOK REVIEW)

Aravind Adiga. *Last Man in Tower.*
New Delhi: Fourth Estate, 2011. 419 pages.

A CHRONICLE OF THE NEW INDIA

Ramshankar Nanda

This is the second novel of the Man Booker Prize-winning author, Aravind Adiga. While *White Tiger* ambitiously spanned both the hinterland (Bihar/Dhanbad) and the capital(Delhi/Bangalore) in a bid to map the whole of India, the present work is located in Mumbai, the financial hub of India, with a plotline that anyone familiar with Mumbai would relate to. The focus takes us to familiar Adiga territory – self- nation dynamic after economic liberalisation.

The story revolves round two central figures - a retired schoolteacher (Yogesh Murthy known as 'Masterji') and a pushy builder(Dharmen Shah of the Confidence Group) who is planning to buy the old property occupied by the teacher(Vishram Society near Santa Cruz Airport, Vakola) to replace it with new-age luxury apartments . In more ways than one this is a well-constructed story and it is about the New India, a nation committed to an open economy and unbridled competition. The action is compressed into a period of approximately seven months and the narrative is divided into nine books, with chapters organised under date entries (11 May to 23 December). It opens with the hugely inflated offer made by the builder to the owners of Tower A to sell their units at many times more than the market price and explores unrelentingly the consequent impact on a motley group of residents who are completely beside themselves in the face of the unexpected windfall. Tension mounts as Masterji with two others in the Housing Society resist the lucrative bait, leading to fears that the deal may fall through or may be withdrawn. Adiga deftly manipulates human capacity for greed and exposes the unpredictable outcomes this can trigger in an otherwise placid environment of routine neighbourly exchanges. In the end the retired teacher is alone, resisting all by himself – the last man in tower. The tale bears out Shah's confident assertion early on: "The builder is one man in Bombay who never loses a fight." The reader is left calculating the costs on both the sides – the stubborn truculence of the old teacher who takes things too far in his dogged opposition and the pyrrhic victory of the wily builder whose health is failing inexorably.

It is a fine balance that the author strikes between the conflicting ethos of the two key figures in the story. In Dharmen Shah Adiga embodies a recurring formula of his fiction: "In a socialist economy, the small business man has to be a thief to prosper." In Masterji the emphasis is more on "the

expanding square footage of his inner life": "A man's past keeps growing, even when his future has come to a full stop." But in the larger ethical context, so the narrative seems to suggest, the two spheres of real estate and inner life are difficult to separate. This leak into each other, making any facile generalisation about human nature increasingly problematic.

At his best Adiga produces a fiction that records the complex collage of metropolitan India that almost threatens to crowd out the human agent:

> A cow had been tied up by the side of the fried-snacks store, a healthy animal with a black comet mark on its forehead. It had just been milked, and a bare-chested man in a dhoti was taking away a mildewed bucket inside which fresh milk looked like radioactive liquid. Squatting by the cow a woman in a saffron sari was squeezing gruel into balls. Next to her two children were being bathed by another woman. Half a village crammed into a crack in the pavement. The cow chewed on grass and jackfruit rinds. Round-bellied and big-eyed, aglow with health: it sucked in diesel and exhaust fumes, particulate matter and sulphur dioxide, and churned them in its four stomachs, creaming good milk out of bad air and bacterial water....

If this is reminiscent of R.K.Narayan's sardonic evocation of the crowded Indian milieu Adiga writes in that tradition, except that the minutiae on display have become more dense and discrete. Occasionally, there are deft touches in characterisation as in the following portrait of the priest, Shankar Trivedi:

> The priest, in between births, marriages, and deaths, gave lessons in the proper recitation of Sanskrit verse to paying pupils. The well-oiled moustache that sat on his lips was itself a fine line of poetry: supple and balanced, robustly black with a tinge of grey at the edges, punctuated in the middle by a perfect caesura. Trivedi was curling its end and smiling, but truth was leaking out of his eyes and nose.

But given Adiga's effort to create a microcosm of the nation in Vishram Cooperative Housing Society while grounding it in the specificities of a fast-changing Bombay/Mumbai the narrative tends to be diffuse because there are far too many cameos of the foregoing type. The purchase the narrator gains by way of a broad canvas and many individual stories is compromised by the lack of intensity and direction in the main human drama. No doubt, the author plots the central opposition between the teacher and the builder with a lot of care and skill, but this has a predetermined and staged quality about it. There are many micronarratives that demand to be unpacked, but the narrator uses a poetic shorthand to foreclose further exploration. Take for instance Masterji's fellow-resident in Tower A, Georgina Rego, who has been forced into social work and bringing up two children all by herself after her husband abandons her.

Her character is skimmed through and she is an adjunct in the central drama of land grab. In one moment of poignant reverie in Bandra, watching a pair of young lovers, she regrets her age and isolation, quite resigned to a bleak future. Here is the narrator's comment: "An old woman's night is so small: a young woman's night is the whole sky." This is a grand sentence, some would say. But in a novel this would put an additional load on the narrative – in this case, an element of cutting self-pity, conveyed through an arresting metaphor. And if such instances accumulate there is an unmistakable sense of dispersal in narrative energy.

All acts of storytelling involve choices. As any writer would assert, one pays a price for choices made. Adiga has clearly established his talent in the area of social comedy suitably tinged with dark humour. One waits for his next move.

■■

CONTRIBUTORS

Aloka Patel is Lecturer in the Department of English, Sambalpur University, Odisha.

Ashok K Mohapatra is Professor in the Department of English, Sambalpur University, Odisha.

Jayeeta Bagchi is Assistant Professor of English, National University of Study and Research in Law, Ranchi, Jharkhand.

Nandana Dutta is Professor in the Department of English, Guwahati University, Assam.

N.K. Mishra was formerly Reader in the Department of English, G.M. College, Sambalpur, Odisha.

P.Muralidhar Sharma is Lecturer in the Department of Basic Sciences and Humanities, Silicon Institute of Technology, Sambalpur, Odisha.

Pramod K Nayar is Associate Professor in the Department of English, University of Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh.

Ramshankar Nanda is Professor in the Department of English, Sambalpur University, Odisha.

Sabita Tripathy is Professor in the Department of English, Sambalpur University, Odisha.

Samrat Sengupta is Research Scholar at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata, West Bengal.

Sanjeev K Munda is Senior Research Fellow (RGNF), working on the fiction of James Joyce and John McGahern's fiction for his PhD in the Department of English, Sambalpur University, Odisha.

Saswat Das is Assistant Professor of English in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT, Kharagpur, West Bengal.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
U.G.C. SPECIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (DRS-I)
SAMBALPUR UNIVERSITY - 768019

Printed at Sri Krishna Printing Works, Sambalpur, skpwsbp@gmail.com