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Bryan Reynolds, Ronan Paterson, Amitava Roy, Subir Dhar, Tapu Biswas
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Phone: (033) 2466 2688/98304 05624/9748726895.
E.mail:profroy@gmail.com,tapu_biswas@yahoo.com,

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In Memoriam

MANJU DUTTA GUPTA

(1933-2018)

Former Professor of English

Rabindra Bharati University

Kolkata

- **Debnarayan Bandyopadhyay**, Ph.D.: Vice- Chancellor, Bankura University, Bankura, West Bengal.
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- **R. N. Rai**, D. Litt. : Professor of English, Banaras Hindu University, Uttar Pradesh.
- **Sanjukta Dasgupta**, Ph.D. : Professor of English and former Dean, University of Calcutta.

Contents

From the Editorial Desk

Welcome to the Vol. X, No.- XIII issue of **International Journal of Cultural Studies and Social Sciences**. From this number on we have decided to publish more Special Issues on single themes than in previous years. For such issues we will invite a Guest Editor to collaborate with us whose intensive and extensive knowledge of the subject area concerned will add extra value to our prestigious publications. This time we have chosen *Classical Literatures and Epic, Eastern and Western* (Pg to pg) as our special focus and our Guest Editor is Professor Dr Syed Manzoorul Islamof Dhaka University, Bangladesh whose reputation and renown as a scholar is globally acclaimed.

We open with Dr Antony Johae who explores the Scope, Contents and Discontents! of Comparative Literature. Dr Johae is a noted alumnus of Sussex University, UK (his PhD on Comparative Lit. comes from that renowned institution). And his work on Comp. Lit., on Translation and Cultural Studies have established this Comparativist as a much sought-after expert across the continents. This is a paper that is a *must* for all scholars in the field. It demands to be read over and over again.

We begin our special issue on Epics with Sanskritist Dr Pradip Bhattacharya's wise and witty exploration of the debate concerning Homer and Vyasa. Dr Bhattacharya is a Renaissance Man of Letters but the special brand of scholarship for which he is known the world over is related to the Epic, Eastern and Western. His pursuit of the Epics and the Epical is charged with passion and as a highly active researcher and scholar he passionately ferrets out and re-discovers 'lost' Epics and variant versions across Asia and the Indian subcontinent! This Journal hopes to present in the near future some of Dr Bhattacharya's extraordinary discoveries and astonishing research-work in this field.

Dr Papia Mitra explores from a comparative perspective the invocations in the texts of Western and Eastern Epics and offers some brilliant insights into Epical narrative praxis.

Young scholar and translator Pratima Das has achievedin a short time considerable renown through her innovative Hindi translation of Shakespeare, T. S. Eliot and other contemporary and modern masters. For the special focus in this issue she wonderfully translates the opening 26 lines or the Exordium/Invocation of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. As far as the Editors know there is no viable reader-friendly translation/ transcreation of Milton into Hindi that is extant. Translating *Paradise Lost* is a daunting task but Ms Das comes through with flying colours. Perhaps her work can inspire other experts to translate Milton into 'Indian tongues'. Ms Das adds another transcreation from another classic text, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (Act. III, Sc. III) for the delectation of Hindi-speaking readers and theatre workers.

Raj Raj Mukherjee, M Phil scholar, explores with erudition the problem of Dharma and right and wrong action in the *Mahabharata* through his 'Rust in the Sword of Dharma'. Undergraduate prodigy AisikMaity concentrates on Bharata Muni's *Natyashastra* by bringing together a compendium of commentary from KapilaVatsyayan to Richard Schechner. Research scholar Lopamudra Dey brings the whole range of critical thinking, Eastern and Western, to bear upon the Role of the Gods in Homer, Valmiki and Vyasa. That brings to a close our special focus in this issue.

Other important work included in this issue has Dr ManishaSarkar highlighting the controversial role of marginalised women characters in V. S. Naipaul's fiction. This is a multi-layered exhaustive exploration of women figures in the Nobelist's work that makes a very strong and subtly argued case for viewing the 'misogynist' Naipaul as a writer ultimately sympathetic to women. Professor Sarkar, who has made Caribbean English Literatures her home, concludes that Naipaul's ironic vision frequently shows women's struggle at 'Home' and in 'the World' in a positive perspective.

Dr Swati Roy Chowdhury takes us to the Australian Bush and the Outback to explore the work of Will Ogilvie, the so-called 'Moderate Bushman'. She places Ogilvie in relation to the two other famed Bush Balladiers Banjo Paterson and Henry Lawson to reveal the underlying patriarchal currents in the work of Ogilvie who publicly exhibits a sympathetic stance towards womenfolk. This paper shows why Dr Roy Chowdhury is one of our acclaimed Australianists.

Globally renowned scholar of Western and Indian Absurdist theatre Dr Tapu Biswas presents a short piece on possible ways of teaching Harold Pinter's Comedy of Menace to undergraduate students in Indian Universities

and colleges. This is a good model which teachers of undergraduate classes will find viable.

Premanjana Banerjee who has long experience of teaching English and Communicative English in two premiere colleges in Kolkata explores the post-modernist perspective on textuality and subjectivity, history and fiction. In the process she gives us in-depth analyses of A.S. Byatt's *Possession* and John Fowl's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

In our Poetry Section we present British poet Chrys Salt who was recently awarded the M.B.E. for services to the Arts. Also included are two short poems from Pradip Chatterjee.

Wishing you all a very happy new year to come and happy reading

Amitava Roy
Syed Manzoorul Islam

Comparative Literature : Its Scope, Contents and Discontents

Antony Johae

Introduction

Early comparatists in the field of Literature began by working across time rather than through time as with traditional literary studies. They sought to cross national frontiers and to study the literature of other nations in relation to their own. This often meant breaking through linguistic barriers, requiring the researcher to work with more than one language.

More recently, the emphasis in Comparative Literature has been on crossing cultural divides. The tendency is now to take into account the cultural milieu in which literary works are produced. This means that texts are examined in relation to the societies in which they have been written; that is, both intrinsically from within the text and extrinsically from contextual indicators.

The French comparatists, who pioneered the discipline in the nineteenth century, were more interested in extrinsic criteria (sources, influences, etc.) than in analyzing texts closely. In the mid-twentieth century, when the New Criticism was current (particularly in the United States), the opposite was the case; comparatists compared texts, but often ignored cultural factors.

Again, in the early days of comparative literary studies in Europe, scholars tended to look for similarities between one literature and another, perhaps with the larger aim of demonstrating what nations had in common, thus expressing an implicit desire for peace among nations after the protracted Napoleonic Wars.

Today in the field of Comparative Literature, the emphasis is rather on difference and the recognition that the form or substance of literary works varies according to the cultures, languages, and traditions in which they have grown up. This approach to literature may help us not only to understand

other cultures, but also to situate literature in the context of a world in the process of globalisation.

Synchronic Versus Diachronic

In most European countries literature has traditionally been taught historically, that is diachronically through time. There have often been political reasons for this associated with national identityand the felt need by governments to showcase the "best" of a nation's literature. There are obviously ideological and, at times, propagandistic motives for this. But it is an approach which has tended to isolate the literature of a nation or culture from other literatures, and has often engendered insular attitudes which have discouraged enquiry into literatures and cultures beyond national frontiers. On the other hand, the study of the literary canon of a nation or state can offer an outsider a window into a particular culture without the need physically to cross geo-political frontiers. I can vouch for this by drawing on my experience before travelling to Ghana to take up a university post there. I knew very little about West African societies before setting off, but after reading Ayi KweiArmah's novel, *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, I felt culturally more prepared for what was to come.

An historical approach to the study of literature entails the formation of a canon; that is, works which by virtue of their proven authenticity and perceived quality are set apart from other works by the academy to figure in the curricula of university courses. This means thata minority of texts are selected and become institutionalised to the exclusion of the majority. In addition, there is a tendency in canon construction to place literary works in a hierarchy. In the case of English literature, Shakespeare would be placed at the top of the hierarchy in drama; possibly, Jane Austen at the top in the nineteenth-century novel, and T.S.Eliot undoubtedly in Modernist poetry. This has sometimes led to inflexibility in the composition of university syllabi, although there is currently evidence to suggest that the canon of English literature is undergoing at least some revision, and even reformation, caused by rival interests such as those of feminists situated within the academy.

While traditional approaches to the study of literature have been followed diachronically through time – in English Literature beginning with the Old English epic, *Beowulf*, through to modernist novels by writers such as Virginia Woolf – the study of literature comparatively has tended to work synchronically across geographical space and over only limited segments of time. Canon formation has not resulted because rather than setting out to

promote the homogeneity, and sometimes superiority, of a particular national literature,comparatists have sought to transgress political frontiers of nations, to break down linguistic barriers, and to cross over into other cultures in order to come to an understanding of literature on a global scale.

Goethe's concept of "Weltliteratur" is an early example of the realization that the study of literature across national frontiers could lead to practical changes in, for example, dramaturgy as evidenced in his appreciation of Shakespeare's plays as an alternative to the dominance of French neoclassical norms of theatrical production.Broadly speaking, Goethe advocated an opening up to the literature of other nations as a way of mediating between them;also, as a means of gaining knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the literature of another nation; and to increase awareness of the reception of foreign literature on the literature of the home nation (see Goethe 3-11).

In the nineteenth century, the comparison of literature across the nations and principalities of Europe inevitably involved confrontation with barriers of language,which presupposed either the reading of foreign texts in the original language or in translation. French comparatists have always insisted on a working knowledge of at least two languages. There have been good reasons for this, one of which is that it is difficult to enter fully into the culture in which a text has been producedunless one has a degree of competence in the foreign language. Linguistic lack also bars the researcher from a stylistic reading of the foreign text(s) singled out for comparison;nor can use be made of foreign secondary literature such as literary criticism, biography, and letters, unless they have been translated into the language of the researcher.

In order to provide first-hand experience of comparative research, I would like now to draw on my experience of carrying out a comparative study of the novels of Fyodor Dostoevsky, who wrote in Russian, and Franz Kafka, who wrote in German. As an undergraduate, I knew neither of these languages and realised that if I were to begin work on my doctoral thesis, I would be bound to learn one of them. I therefore opted to learn German by going to live, teach and research in Munich for two years.Russian would not have been the easier choice because at that time it was not a straight forward matter to take up residence in the Soviet Union.

Having completed my work, and when asked by the external examiners how I could justify having knowledge of only one of the languages, my answer was that since Kafka had read Dostoevsky's novels in German, I had

also read them in German and, in so doing, had read them through Kafka's eyes. Since this was to be a comparative study of influence, my explanation was accepted without further question.

One huge advantage in reading both Dostoevsky and Kafka in German was that secondary literature in German on both writers became available to me, and I was able to unearth criticism which I had not heard of in research conducted in English. In this way, it was possible to back up my thesis with German secondary material which aided me in presenting a fresh view of both writers. One particularly valuable find was a biography of Dostoevsky written in German which Kafka had read,leaving no doubt as to his exposure to Dostoevsky's life and works.

Not speaking Russian might have excluded me from reading Mikhail Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* had it not appeared for the first time in English translation in 1973, just as I was starting my research. His book turned out to be crucial to a deeper theoretical and formal awareness of the Russian writer's art.My finished work would certainly have been the poorer without my having access to Bakhtin's ideas. One could speculate further: If I had not gained competence in German, and if Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* had not been translated into English (or French), my research might have lacked the theoretical framework needed for a study of dream and symbolism in the novels of the two chosen writers.[1]

It will perhaps have been noted that my review of Comparative Literature has been focussed on European literature. Until a few decades ago in the Western academy, a Eurocentric bias dominated the discipline. But in the 1970s with the publication of critical works such as Edward Said's *Orientalism*, coupled with a growing academic interest in cultural phenomena, practitioners in Comparative Literature turned their attention to literatures beyond Europe. Unlike in the early days of the discipline when cultural similarity between one European literature and another had been emphasised, differences of cultures became the guiding principle of enquiry. It was no longer a question only of crossing national and linguistic divides, but also of investigating deeper into the complexitiesof diverse cultures such as those of the Indian sub-continent, the Arab world, sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean. In short, Comparative Literature had begun to take on aglobal perspective.

This new emphasis has understandably presented challenges to researchers who have chosen not to confine themselves to their own national,

linguistic and cultural territory. A case in point is my own comparative work on Bratya Basu's adaptation of Shakespeare's tragedy, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. In his Bengali reworking, entitled in English translation,*Hemlat, the Prince of Garanhata*, Basu has evidently used Shakespeare's play as a template for his own drama; but if Basu's text had not been translated from Bangla into English, the opportunity of carrying out a comparative study of Basu's *Hemlat* with Shakespeare's playwould not have been open to me. Even without this limitation, in order to gain an insight into the subtleties of contemporary Bengali culture and societyrequired that I consult those who are a part of that society.[2] I should add in my defence thatwhile certain knowledge and understanding of Indian culture is lacking on my part, it has to some extent been compensated for by my intimate knowledge of Shakespeare's play and the culture from which it derives, and from which I come.

Binary Studies

The word "comparative" in Comparative Studies may denote, in the first instance, two texts, two authors, two nations or states, two languages, and/or two cultures, thus indicating the inherent binary nature of the discipline. Although binary studies in more recent times have tended to expand into inter-textual networks, comparison between two artefacts is often found to be the practice of the day. If one takes a look at the Table of Contents of a recently published issue of an Indian publication, *Literary Confluence: A Global Journal of English and Cultural Studies* 1 (2014), one can observe that the second contribution, by Karabi Hazarika, is binary in nature: "Collision of Cultures and Quest for Identity: A Comparative Study of *Yaruingam* and *Things Fall Apart*." In the same issuethere is an article by Souraja Tagore entitled, "Performing Shakespeare through Kathak Pandit Birju Maharaja and Saswati Sen's Adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*." In both instances only two texts are involved in comparative discourse. The first title points to a thematic comparison, while the other denotes an adapted Shakespeare play transposed to an Indian setting.

A binary study could also be linked generically in, for example, a comparison between the Anglo-Saxon Epic, *Beowulf*, and the Mesopotamian epic, *Gilgamesh*; or by historical period and literary movement as in a comparative study of Romanticism in England and France. Similarities and differences may also be observed in archetypal formations as, for instance, the island motif in Shakespeare's play, *The Tempest*, and Nikos Kazantzakis' novel, *Zorba the Greek*.

A point to bear in mind is that comparison is a critical tool which allows us to juxtapose works of art across time, space, and language with a view to understanding them within the differing cultural contexts of their production. I would go so far as to argue that university courses in English Literature could be taught comparatively, even if criteria of other nation, other language and other culture are put aside. A reading of Dickens' novels of the city compared and contrasted with Hardy's novels of the countryside would, I believe, tell us more about the condition of industrial England in the nineteenth century than treating the novels separately as in the traditional method of teaching an English Literature syllabus. Taught comparatively, the impression could be given of a community of texts rather than their existence in isolation from one another. I am drawing attention here to the broader issue of inter-textuality, for if as Roland Barthes maintains, "any text is an intertext" (39), it would seem pertinent in the study of a particular literature to read texts intertextually – in twos (or more) and not singly.

In the comparative examples mentioned above,both homologous and dissimilar forms and content have been assumed but, apart from the Indian adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* where the liaisonwith Shakespeare is evident in the title of the article, there has been no suggestion of one text exerting an influence on another, or there having been a two-way exchange between them.If all texts are intertextual, they are so by virtue of a writer's having read other texts so that, for example, certain generic patterns may be replicated or thematic echoes from other texts unconsciously, or consciously, make their appearance in the intertext, thus constituting what Julia Kristeva describes as "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality" (36).

The case of influence, and of directed transfer,is rather more overt, robust, and particular than the latent presence of intertextualreferentiality. Where research is concerned, one may often detect a purposeful borrowing and reworking of another author's, or several authors',text(s), be it an attraction or empathy towards the artistic works of another writer or a repulsion which may result in a suppressive counter-text; e.g. pastiche, parody, burlesque, or travesty. Where exposure to another writer's works is evident, as in the cited article on the Indian adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, comparative analysis of texts may be put in train.On the other hand, it may not at first be obvious, even to a literary scholar, that there lies a close influential connection between the work of one author and that of another, or others. Take my experience of proposing a study of the influence of Dostoevsky's novels on Kafka's writings as a proposal for research. It

certainly raised some eyebrows among my teachers and peers and I was hard put to it to justify my idea, since it had been based, in the first instance, on intuition and not on any substantive scholarly ground.

Certain questions need to be asked before a researcher can justify embarking on a comparative study of influence. (In order to affirm generality, I am calling the influential writer A1 and the influenced writer A2.)

- The first question: would A1's texts have been available to A2, and if so, were they in A2's possession? If they were not available, we do not have grounds to continue.
- If working trans-linguistically, did A2 know the language of A1. If not, had A1's texts been translated into A2's language, or into another language which A2 could read. If not, there can be no grounds for continuing.

(Kafka did not know Russian, but Dostoevsky's novels had been translated into German and had made an impact on the intelligentsia of Prague where Kafka lived. From a fragmentary list compiled ten years after his death, it is known that Kafka had in his possession works in German by, and about, Dostoevsky.)

- Would there have been other translated material, such as A1's letters, diaries, and notebooks which A2 could have read?
- Could A2 have read secondary works written about A1's texts? E.g. literary criticism and biography.
- The question remains, how can we verify A2's reading of these texts, including A1's artistic works?

It is clear from the above that the researcher needs first to establish instances where author A2has had direct contactwith, and exposure to, A1'swritings. This has to be done before the speculative work of comparing A1 and A2's artistic works can begin. Evidence should be looked for by scrutinising A2's letters, journals, diaries, biographical writings (if these are extant), personal interviews, andradio and television interviews (if A2 lives/ lived in the modern era), and in so doing ascertain the extent to which A2 has shown an interest in A1's writings. This exercise is designed to establish the groundwork for a comparative studywhich sets out to demonstrate how the artistic work of A1 has been seminal in the creative productions of A2.

In my preliminary groundwork study, I came across: a) hints in his diaries and letters of Kafka having read some of Dostoevsky's novels; b) mention of a biography of Dostoevsky written in German which Kafka had in his possession; c) Kafka's account in a letter of a dream he had in which Dostoevsky appeared – obviously important bearing in mind the "Study of Dream and Symbolism" of my thesis title; d) Kafka's statement in a letter that he felt Dostoevsky to be one of his "true blood relations" – acrucial observation which confirmed my original intuition concerning a literary bond between the two writers (see Johae, "Groundwork for a Comparative Study of Dostoevsky and Kafka" 25-38).

Once substantial "contact" had been verified, the stage was now set for a comparative study of both writers' artistic works with a view to establishing the kind of technical and thematic transfers, reformations, and transformations which could have taken place. Unlike the groundwork search for facts, comparative close reading of texts would now be, to a large extent, speculative, evaluative, and at times tentative.

Once the whole project had been completed, it might have been possible to expand the research to include another germinal author; in Kafka's case, the writings of Heinrich von Kleist whom Kafka also regarded as one of his "true blood relations." In so doing, one would be enlarging the parameter of research to a trinary comparative formation, which could, by implication,be extended to other writers who may have been influential in the composition of Kafka's fiction. In this way, the binary axis of research would have been reformed into a network of surrounding texts for comparison with the central focus of the study:Franz Kafka's fictional writings.

Alternatively, having demonstrated transfer on a binary axis, one might go on to establish a "chain" of influence by drawing in, let us say, Charles Dickens' novels as motivational in Dostoevsky's literary creations of the city; and by the same token add to the "chain" by proposing Kafka's novel, *Der Prozess* (*The Trial*) as seminal to Albert Camus' *L'étranger* (*The Stranger*); and one could further complicate this chain of influence if one were to revert to Dostoevsky's novella, *Zapiskiizpodpolya* (*Notes from Underground*) as inspirational to Camus' novel, *La chute* (*The Fall*). The methodological paradigm we have traced here can no longer be seen as a binary formation, because ithas been transformed into an inter-related network of texts some of which will bear direct comparison with each other on the plane of influence. Even where influence is not of academic concern, binary

comparison of texts on the basis ofsimilitude and/or diversity will carry with it a propensity to develop into enlarged network formations, thus widening the scope of the comparative study of literary texts with a potential to expand the discipline into new cultural territory.

Postcolonial Literatures

Until the rise of postcolonial literatures from the 1950s onwards, comparative literary studies, as we have seen, tended to be centred on Europe; that is, most comparisons were made between the literatures of European nations and states (e.g., between England and France), or were restricted to particular linguistic areas (e.g.,German speaking Austria and Germany).

With the coming of independence from European powers starting in the middle of the twentieth century, those countries which had been colonised in the past became increasingly aware of their own histories and cultures in their search for a new national identity. Literature was to play a major part in creating this new identity, whether that literature was to be written in local vernacular languages (as, for example, Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, etc. in India), or in the languages of the colonisers (English, Portuguese). In India, a comparative approach to research into the literatures of the numerous linguistic areas of the new democracy would have accordedwith the heterogeneous character of the sub-continent. But, as well as a cultural attachment to each other by virtue of their shared pre-colonial past, the peoples of these territories would have been conscious of their relationship with the absent British and Portuguese of their recent colonised experience.The historical influence of Europe would therefore be central in the thinking of writers in postcolonial India and would cause them often to write about that relationship, as in Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children*, and in Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain*.

There have also been numerous literary "borrowings" from the West as in the case of Shakespeare's plays transposed to Indian settings. One has only to look at a list of translations and adaptations of *Hamlet* into Bengali (let alone into other Indian languages) to realise how alive, and even formative, Shakespeare's presence has been in Indian culture.[3] As well as Indian adaptations for the stage and film, Shakespeare has found his way into other genres of literature, as in Kalyan Ray's 2004 novel *Eastwards* in which Shakespeare is challenged in postcolonial prequels of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*.[4]

With so many adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, one has the impression that India has taken the English playwright to itself – naturalised him, one could say – rather as Ibsen's plays appear to have been integrated into the canon of British drama. This appropriation of Shakespeare is epitomised for me by the statue of the Bard which stands on the corner of a street in Kolkata.

From the example of the interest shown in Shakespeare, it can be seen that Postcolonial writers in India are inclined to look outwards at the world, and by so doing, have encouraged a comparative tendency on the part of postcolonial criticism. However, if some postcolonial authors have chosen to write in European languages, they do not write to imitate Western models, but rather to begin by taking from their own cultures, and then to broaden their outlook to other geographical areas, including those of the colonisers of the past.

If we look at African writing since decolonisation, there has been a similar tendency to write in European languages, while at the same time focussing on African society with an awareness of the recent dominance of Europe. A case in point isChinua Achebe's groundbreaking novel, *Things Fall Apart*, written in English (the language of the coloniser), in which he evokes the process of colonisation as seen from an African perspective.In this way he is seeking to correct an imbalance between colonial narratives written from outside the continent and postcolonial narratives written by insiders.

In the early days after independence, there was a tendency in African academia to prioritise European literature to the detriment of the indigenous arts – no doubt a legacy from the colonial past. In the early1980s, when I was teaching at the University of Ghana, it struck me as anathema that the beautiful campus at Legon should house departments of European languages and literatures at the centre of the campus and that African Studies should be rolled into one undifferentiated discipline, and the department be situated in a mission hut on the campus periphery. Since the University had been built under the British, it seemed to me to exemplify a colonialist view of African culture as merely an extension of the West.

In 1968, the Kenyan author, NgugiWaThiong'o, went so far as to advocate the abolition of the English Department at the University of Nairobi, and to propose that priority be given to Kenyan literature, followed by East African literature, with a further enlargement into African literature, finally taking in literatures beyond Africa. In this academic framework,there would be no intention of atomizing Kenyan literature, but rather of working from a postcolonial perspective towards a comparative continental, and then global awareness of other literatures and cultures (NgugiWaThiong'o145-50).

All these new literatures taken together – African, Latin American, Caribbean, South and South East Asia, Australasian – may be categorised under the comparative umbrella term "Postcolonial Literature." These literatures are not to be regarded as minority literatures, as they have often been seen from the West, but as, literally, majority literatures which are making significant contributions to the literature of the world as a whole.One might cite three recent Nobel Prize winners of literature as evidence of the growing recognition of postcolonial writing: the poet, playwright, and novelist, Wole Soyinka from Nigeria, the West Indian poet and playwright, Derek Walcott, and the Australian novelist, Patrick White.

Whether or not these texts, and others like them, will become institutionalised and put into a qualitative hierarchy to form a canon of Comparative Literature, as has been the case with Euro-American literature, remains to be seen; but for the moment, the rapid growth of the new literatures is a clear sign that literature is in the process of becoming inter-national.[5]

Travel Literature

Travel Literature has come to be regarded as a branch of Comparative Literature because, although it does not necessarily involve comparison of texts trans-nationally, trans-linguistically, or trans-culturally, the traveller/ travel writer him/herself crosses these divides.

Unlike Postcolonial Literature, where the author writes as an "insider" of his/her own culture, the travel writer's view is of another country and is experienced from the outside. What we are concerned with in the study of travel literature is how the "Other" is represented, how the author constructs the culture(s) with which s/he has contact, and what part the writer's own cultural base and/or political ideology may play in the construction of those cultures. Travel accounts often end up *misrepresenting* other peoples by creating stereotypes of them, conveying prejudiced views, and by forming negative perceptions of the "Other." This is particularly true of colonialist writing where a marked tendency has been for the author to undervalueforeign languages, cultures, authors, and their works when compared with the cultural production of the home country, thus using travel writing as an instrument of colonial hegemony.

Susan Bassnett has referred to this phenomenon as "The Politics of Travellers' Tales," (92), by which she means that travellers, in choosing to write about their journeys, often have their own hidden agendas. Her use of

the word "tales" should remind us that travel writing, while it may be considered a non-fictional genre, is a constructed art which does not necessarily agree with objective reality.Such writings may sometimes be seen as "tales" (stories or untruths) rather than factual accounts.

It is certainly the case that all travellers carry with them their own ideological and emotional baggage, and this is bound to affect the way they perceive and experience the customs, traditions, and religions of other cultures. Accounts of travels may also inform the reader of the way the traveller sees him/herself in the world: as a superior being, as a mediator between cultures, as a spokesperson for his/her own culture, as a promoter of cross-cultural exchange, etc.

Finally, the return home can make a traveller see his or her own society in a way differentfromthe moment of departure. The journey's end can either result in a negative reaction andexpose the shortcomings of the traveller's society which went unnoticed before the outset of the journey; or it can reinforce an appreciation of the home country – the place where the traveller will ultimately sit down and turn the experience of travel into literature.[6]

The increased movement of people around the globe is also adding new dimensions to the genre of Travel Literature. Travellers are frequently *not* returning home and are migrating to other countries and joining a growing diaspora. In a sense, these travellers are "insiders" of their country of origin who come as "outsiders" to another country with the object of settling into an alternative culture, the subtleties of which have to be learned. In a sense, this kind of traveller is often living "in between" two nations, two languages, and two cultures, particularly when the choice is made by the traveller to make frequent returns to the country of origin.[7] Writers who belong to a diaspora often participate in this trend by evoking a literal and cultural journey of migration in their art. One might either categorise this kind of literature on its own as Literature of the Diaspora, or treat it as a sub-section of Postcolonial Literature, or of Travel Literature as I have done here. Whichever designation one prefers, it does not alter the fact that such a literature, because it engages thematically with crossing national, linguistic, and cultural frontiers,readily falls within the domain of Comparative Literature.

Devolving Literature

If Britain happens to be the home base of a comparatist working in the field of literature, it is likely that many of the comparisons that are going to be made will include elements of English literature, if only because English

will be the language not only of the written research, but also of the texts that will be the object of comparative researchwith "foreign" texts across chosen nations, languages, and cultures. But Susan Bassnett, in her introductory book on Comparative Literature, has proposed that the literature of the British Isles also be included within the remit of the discipline.[8]This will mean that so-called English Literature will be perceived differently to the way it has been taught traditionally. Study will be devolved away from the capital – London – to take in the literary production of the culturally varied geographical countries and regions of the British Isles. The objective will be to build up a network of regional literature to be read comparatively, rather than establishing a metropolis-centred canon of works for study in isolation from one another.The emphasis in a comparative approach will be on literature as part of a diverse culture, and not on literature reduced to the "best" works in aninflexible canon manipulated by the establishment, and which serve the interests of a ruling elite based in the metropolis and the Oxbridge academy.

Neither will the new syllabus be structured on a chronological grid as has been the usual practice, but will be arranged spatially across the countries of the British Isles – Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and England. The course will be given a geographical designation – "The Literature of the British Isles" – and not "English Literature", for it should be borne in mind that English is not the only language spoken and written in the British Isles: Celtic languages are still spoken today (e.g., Welsh and Gaelic), while others are in the process of revival (e.g., Irish and Cornish). This will also entail a revival of the literature in those languages.

In his criticism of the popular *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, which isfrequently chosen as a course book in university English Literature courses, David Damrosch reveals some remarkable hiatuses, particularly where it concerns Celtic literature. He writes:

> The unfortunate thing is that much of the greatest medieval literature produced in the British Isles was written in Ireland and Wales, yet only the Anglo-Saxon and Middle English texts have reached the anthologies. Indeed you would have had a better chance of finding your way into the Norton anthology if you were writing in Latin than if you were writing in any of the indigenous languages of Britain other than Anglo-Saxon – and this despite the fact that Anglo-Saxon was transformed beyond recognition after the Norman invasion, while Welsh and Gaelic are living languages to this day. (129)

Damrosch sums up by proposing:

> Instead of seeing London as the center of a circle – a circle that leaves much British literature beyond the pale – we can present the literary culture of London as one focus[. . .] for many different, partially overlapping ellipses, each with a second focus elsewhere. One such ellipse would encompass the relations between London and the Continent; others, those between England and its inner colonies of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales; another, England and the United States[. . .].(129-30)

If the study of English Literature in the British academy has been slow to devolve, this is not so in contemporary British society where devolution has accelerated politically (e.g., in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland), socially (e.g., in demographic changes), and culturally (e.g., through immigration). There are also clear signs of the devolution of the arts, such as the proliferation of poetry groups, small presses devoted to publishing artistic works, including self-publishing. Furthermore, live transmissions from London theatres (e.g., Shakespeare's plays), and international performances (e.g. the Bolshoi Ballet from Russia) to cinemas, arts centres, and village halls in the provinces, and remote regions of the British Isles, are also symptomatic of a devolutionary cultural trend.

If there be any doubt about the cultural diversity of the countries and regions of the British Isles, the phenomenon of immigration since the SecondWorldWar has added a further dimension to the heterogeneous composition of these societies. Not only have cultural differences increased, but it means that minority ethnic groups are also producing their own literature – either in English or the languages of the countries of their origin.

What has been proposed for the British Isles could also be applied to the study of the literature of India, whose historically multicultural complexity, both in terms of ethnicity, language, and regional diversity, would lend itself to the study of a devolved literature.In this way, so-called minority literatures would no longer find themselves marginalised, but would figure importantly in the culture of a particular region, and would gain recognition by comparison with the literature of other regions.

Interdisciplinary Literature

With the scientific revolution in Europe in the late seventeenth century, there came an increasing need for researchers and scholars to specialise in a

particular field to the exclusion of other disciplines. As knowledge became more complex, so too disciplines at the universities became ever more specialised and compartmentalised.By the nineteenth century, the sciences had gained more importance than the humanities because of the rising currency of scientific methods. Study of the arts was generally regarded as unscientific and lacking in utilitarian value.

The term "interdisciplinarity" was first used in the social sciences in the mid-1920s, and came into academic use in the humanities at the end of the Second World War. There was an increasing reaction, in academia, against the isolation of the disciplines, and a felt need to encourage contact between them as had been the case before the Enlightenment. There were several impulses behind this change of view, among which a search for a wide-ranging knowledge unrestricted by disciplinary barriers, and a questioning of the nature of knowledge itself, with the possibility of producing new forms of knowledge.

Literary studies havecooperated in, and gained something from, interdisciplinary approaches to scholarly research. In the first place, it has allowed researchers to appropriate some of the terminology and methodology of other disciplines, and to reform their view of the theory and practice of literature; secondly, it has broken away from limiting text-based analysis, and has taken into account the larger cultural environment in which literature is produced. Indeed, so much emphasis is currently placed on culture that it is frequently the case that literary texts – in the traditional sense of poetry, prose fiction, and drama – no longer provide the material for study, but rather cultural phenomena of all kinds, from advertising to eating. One might criticise this diffusion into popular cultural territory ("Cultural Studies" as it is now called), and conclude that the freedom of interdisciplinarity lacks the necessary resolution for orderly research. On the other hand, those who espouse this radical approach often do so in order to discover not only the interconnections between different kinds of knowledge, but also the discovery of new paradigms of knowledge.[9]

Drawing on my first experience as an undergraduate at the University of Essex in the late sixties, I can say that the inclusion of several disciplines in what was called the "Comparative First Year" set me off on an academic trajectory about which I have never had any regrets. There were four components in the programme: Literature, History of Art, Sociology, and Government (Political Science). (In the second year, students had a choice

of specialisation in one of the four disciplines.) Already in that first year, in my written work on literature, I found myself drawing on, for example, baroque sculpture and architecture in an essay on the English Metaphysical poets; Karl Marx in a discussion of D.H. Lawrence's novel, *Women in Love*; Max Weber's work on bureaucracies in Kafka's novel, *The Trial*; and the relationship of art to philosophy in Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew*.One can observe in the first example a placing of the poetry of the Metaphysical poets into an artistic and cultural context; in the second, Lawrence's narrative seen within a specific political framework; in Kafka's *The Trial*, the application of Weber's sociological paradigm as a means of interpreting the text; and in the essay on *Rameau's Nephew*, a microcosm of the philosophical and artistic debate current during the European Enlightenment. In these illustrations of reading in an interdisciplinary manner, there is an evident tendency to view the text(s) chosen for researchas emerging from an historical context, whether it be cultural, political, sociological, philosophical, or artistic.Obviously, this does not mean that literary texts will go unscrutinised, but rather that they will be examined in the light of criteria applicable to disciplines lying outside of literary studies, with a view to illuminating those texts beyond the tenets of traditional practical criticism. Indeed, Comparative Literature is open to all forms of literary criticism, whether it bebased on local poetics or on internationalfeminism, Russian formalism, French structuralism and post-structuralism, or American new historicism, etc.

A further element in the movement towards interdisciplinarity in the study of literature has been the advent of media studies in the academy, and concomitant with it, the rise of the adaptation of literary texts to other media, particularly to film and television. Evidence for this trend can seenin the programme of the 8th World Shakespeare Conference on Comparative Literature and Translation Studies,where two of the papers are devoted to adaptations of Shakespeare's plays to film: *Hamlet* to Bollywood and *Titus Adronicus* to Hollywood.

While in the examples I have offered, the text has been the central focus of research, one of the problems which has emerged by including Interdisciplinary Studies under the banner of Comparative Literature is the frequency with which literary works no longer form the basis for comparison.This perhaps explainswhy some comparatists, including myself, have reservations about a lack of academic restraint incurred by the breadth of interdisciplinary criteria in the field. A case in point is my experience of searching for literature-based conferences notified on "Conference Alerts"

on the world-wide-web. Nowadays, more often than not, these are interdisciplinary in nature and do not prioritise literature in the programme; this means that there are unlikely to be many papers where literature forms the main focus of the proceedings.

I do not mean to dismiss interdisciplinarity as a tool in the study of Comparative Literature. On the contrary, I hope it has been made clear from my early experience of reading literary texts that interdisciplinary readings have offered expanded ways of writing about literature which have opened up texts to new insights and to revisionary critique.

Translation Studies

As we have seen under *Binary Studies*, the French school of Comparative Literature has insisted on the trans-linguistic character of the discipline, which means that practitioners need to be competent in at least two languages. American comparatists, on the other hand, have encouraged the use of translations as a means of overcoming the obstacles posed by texts in languages other than English. Until recently, they have tended to regard the theory and practice of translation as the academic territory of linguistics, not of literature. Translation has been regarded as marginal to creative writing, and was seen as a skill rather than as an art.

The late twentieth century witnessed a fundamental change of attitude towards the translation of literary texts; consideration was given to the part played by translated literature as a shaping force in different cultures with anemphasis placed on the translation itself (the target text) rather than on the work translated (the source text). The target text was no longer regarded as inferior to the source text, but on a par with it, and might even end up superior to the source text and expose its weaknesses. In short, translation should generate another work of art – a transformation of the source text, not a copy of it.

The new "polysystems" theory of translation, first, challenged the established discourse of translation; it then traced a history of translation studies with the aim of employing new techniques in textual translation. The new school of translation used the term "polysystems" to describe itself in order to emphasise the flexibility of approach required in the linguistic and aesthetic manipulation of texts in the processes of translation. Its practitioners rejected what they regarded as the old dogmas surrounding translation, which had failed to take account of the effect of literary works in translation on target cultures.

The research carried out by the new school of translation show that translations play an important part in cultures which are in an early stage of development, or in literary communities that see themselves as peripheral to larger literary systems. The research also showed that translation of literary texts increase in minority literary communities during times of crisis, at major historical turning points, and in periods of literary vacuum; i.e., when there is a lack of literary production in the native language.

A further observation made was that in major literary systems, such as English, a relatively small amount of literary translation is undertaken from other languages (e.g., from Dutch into English), whereas translation of English texts into languages of minor literary systems (e.g., from English into Dutch) is common. However, the prevalence of translations of English texts into minor literary systems does not mean a passive resignation on the part of these systems to the influence of the larger literary community, but rather what the Czech scholarVladimírMacura describes as "an active, even aggressive act, as an appropriation of foreign cultural values," with a consequent reinforcement of the minor literary culture (qtd. in Bassnett 143-44).[10]

It might be asked why Translation Studies has been included under the umbrella of Comparative Literature when traditionally it has been regarded as a skill rather than a discipline;the answer, in the first instance, would be that translation involves crossing from one language to another as has been one of the criteria proposed for Comparative Literature; secondly, recent theories have insisted that translation requires an understanding of the target culture if a genuine transfer of meaning is to striketargeted readers as genuine; the translator will need mentally to cross over to another culture in order to reach the targeted readership. This is why the translator can no longer be regarded as someone whose skills lie only in the domain of linguistics and whose main function is utilitarian. The processes of translation require that the translator be sensitive to artistic phenomena so that what results from translation of a text may end up as a work of art in its own right. In this way, the translator's skill need no longer be considered marginal to literary studies, but can now be recognised as an essential aspect of the discipline, and in particular to Comparative Literature where translated texts so frequently figure as surrogates in the pursuit of comparison.

Conclusion

In his article, "The Crisis of Comparative Literature," published in 1963, René Wellek found the discipline to be in a "stagnant backwater." He lays the blame at those comparatists whose concern is with "'factual relations,' sources and influences, intermediaries and reputations as its only topics" (292). Wellek's criticism here points to a concentration onextraneous facts at the expense of the evaluation of literary works. In order to correct what he regards as material redundancy and a methodological imbalance between "extrinsic" genetic criteria and "intrinsic" qualitative assessment, he proposes a "holistic" conception, "one which sees the work of art as a diversified totality, as a structure of signs, which, however, imply and require meanings and values" (294).

While Wellek is in agreement with the basic concept of "Comparative Literature" as a designation for the study of literaturetranscending the boundaries of a particular national literature (290), the examples he gives do not go beyond the bounds of Europe; and it is here perhaps that one can locate another of the reasons for the discipline becoming a "stagnant backwater" at the time Wellek was writing.Nowhere in his article does he propose that the waters of Comparative Literature be refreshed by venturing along, so to speak, the flowing rivers of other cultures – of India, Egypt, Iraq, and Brazil, to take a few examples from Wellek's water metaphor.

Even as late as 1995, one detects in the responses to the 1993 Bernheimer Report of the American Comparative Literature Association, an uncertainty about the validity of the discipline, as though its scope were unclear because of the multiple variables to be taken into consideration.Obviously, a lack of clarity concerning the parameters of Comparative Literature is not going to help promote the discipline in the universities of the world, and is perhaps why in a recent survey carried out at fifty Indian universities, it was shown that while courses in Postcolonial Studies have increased, others are on the decline, particularly Comparative Literature and Translation Studies,both of which are listed in the survey under "Neglected Areas" (Tasildar69).

Clearly, if students are to be attracted to Comparative Literature, they need to be informed about the scope of the discipline instead of being launched into uncharted *terraincognita*. This is part of the reason for my undertaking in this essay(French: *essai* – attempt; trial; experiment; testing; essay) to put some method into the matter in order to guide students through the tributaries of the discipline so that it will not die for want of clarity of scope and purpose.

When Gayatri Spivak calls her book on Comparative Literature, *Death of a Discipline* (2003), she does not mean to say that the crisis has resulted in expiration, but rather that the old factualist and Eurocentric Comparative Literature hasto give way to what she calls the "open-plan fieldwork" of the new Comparative Literature (35), by which is meant a comparison of literatures which includes "the older minorities: African, Asian, Hispanic [. . .] the new postcolonialty of the post-Soviet sector and the special place of Islam [and] the evolving Asia-Pacific [etc.]" (84).Earlier in the volume, she expresses the hope that the spread ofthe new Comparative Literature to areas outside of Europe and the United States will result in the discipline"flourishing" in the many linguistic traditions of the world, rather than a "U.S.-style" World Literature establishing itself as "the staple of Comparative Literature in the global South" (39). There is clearly a political dimension to Spivak's view of the new Comparative Literature, both in her resistance to globalisation and to "the definitive tendency of the dominant to appropriate the emergent" (100). It is therefore necessary for the new Comparative Literature to counter such dominance, to work against the grain of the "financialization of the world" (85) (including literature) and "the imposition of the same system of exchange everywhere"(72) (including the standardisation of literature syllabi). When Spivakreminds teachers of literature that through reading, "literature can be our teacher as well as our object of investigation" (23), she is expressing confidence in the discipline to counter the dominant; and one might add that, since the new Comparative Literature is to function on an "open-plan fieldwork" basis, its attitude of looking outwards at alterityin order to understand other cultures better, will more readily act as a counter to dominant world views whichmake few allowances for particular histories and cultural diversity.

In a less polemical manner, but affirming the positive function Spivak ascribes for Comparative Literature, Ahearn and Weinstein assert in optimistic vein:

> We [teachers of Comparative Literature] are effectively the humanities counterpart to international relations, in that our field testifies to a major fact of life: the world around us is increasingly interdependent, a mix of cultures and societies and nations that are linked together in business, trade, information, environment, and much else. (81)

In the same article, Ahearn and Weinstein, having discussed the "virtues" and "gifts" of the discipline, point to a social asset which gives full justification to the teaching of Comparative Literature in the universities of the world:

> [. . .] the geopolitical activities, conflicts, and dilemmas of our time require a citizenry that has learned something about the history, aspirations, and complex reality of other peoples, and the study of literature and other arts is a privileged entry into these matters. (78)

Can there be a better reason for promoting the study of Comparative Literature?

Notes

* A revised and expanded version of a paper presented at the 8th World Shakespeare Conference and International Seminar on Comparative Literature and Translation Studies, 3rd to 6th January, 2015, in Kolkata; organised by the Shakespeare Society of Eastern India.

[1] Thesis title: "In Two Minds: A Study of Dream and Symbolism in Dostoevsky andKafka."

[2] I am particularly indebted to Professor Amitava Roy and SuchandraGhosh for consultations and advice.

[3] See "Select List of Hamlet Translations and Adaptations into Bangla from 1852 to 2010." Basu vii-viii.

[4] For an account, and illustrations, of adaptations and appropriations of Shakespeare's plays to other cultures, including Kalyan Ray's novel, see Johae, "Shakespeare's Plays Across Cultures" 1-21.

[5] A useful introduction to the theory and practice of postcolonial criticism is Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back*.

[6] A recent collection of essays edited by Hulme and Youngs – *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* – will provide the reader with current perspectives.

[7] JhumpaLahiri's novel, *The Namesake*, provides an illustration of a diasporic narrative in which a return journey is made back to the country of origin.

[8] See Bassnett, Chapter 3, "Comparing the Literatures of the British Isles" 48-69.

[9] For a succinct survey, see Moran, *Interdisciplinarity*.

[10] This is a summary of Bassnett, Chapter 7, "From Comparative Literature to Translation Studies" 138-61. For a larger account, see Bassnett-Maguire, *Translation Studies*. On polysystems, see Evan-Zohar, *Papers in Historical Poetics*, and Toury, *In Search of a Theory of Translation*.

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Special Focus
on
Classical Literatures and the Epics :
Eastern and Western
(From page 27 to 73)

VYASA ADAPTED HOMER—OR VICE VERSA?

Pradip Bhattacharya

The Sir Asutosh Mukherjee collection in the National Library contains a rare book by an East India Company officer arguing that the *Ramayana* story was strongly influenced by the *Iliad*.Other than Megasthenes' references to Indians carrying banners of Heracles and worshipping Dionysus, the Sophist Dios Chrysostom(40-115 AD) states how despite not knowing Greek barbarians, such as those in India, are enchanted by Homer's poetry (the *Iliad*).[1]The Roman Claudius Aelianus(175-235 AD) reiterated this (e.g. the Trojan horse becoming Bhasa's wooden elephant in *Pratigya Yaugandharayana*).

In 1871 A.F.Weber, refuting M.H.Fauche's proposition that Homer had used the *Ramayana* as a guide (which was supported by A.Lillie in 1912), claimed that it was merely Buddhist legends grafted on to borrowingsfrom Homer, an argument thatW.T.Telang vigorously refuted. Weber cited Odysseus' archery feat to win Penelope as having influenced the archery contests of Rama and Arjuna, ignoring that Rama breaks the bow and Arjuna does not shoot rivals dead. Conversely, J. Lallemant argued in 1959 that the *Mahabharata* (MBH) influenced the *Aeneid*. In 1961 G. Duckworth argued that Turnus' portrayal was based upon Duryodhana. In 1968 G. Dumezil put forward his theory of an Indo-European tri-functional ideology illustrated by the Pandavas (the dharma-king, the warrior, the grooms). Now, Fernando Wulff Alonso, a Spanish professor in the University of Malaga has built up a strong case that the MBH adapted the Homeric cycle and other Greek myths.[2]

Alonso proposes that, followingthe Greek invasion, the MBH composerssy stematically used "an extensive index of Hellenistic materials," beginning with the *Iliad*'s framework of the massacre of heroes willed by gods. He brushes aside N.J.Allen's suggestion that the similarities between Arjuna and Odysseus stem from an older Indo-European narrative tradition.

Curiously, Alonsocites over 40 close parallels in the archery contests for Draupadi and Penelope that suggest a common Indo-European paradigm.

Alonso sees the MBH embodying the formation of post-Vedic "Hinduism" as a reaction against Buddhism and Jainism, propagating Krishna-ite worship (he overlooks Shiva's pervasive presence in the MBH). The "discovery" of Brahmi script in Ashoka's time is a watershed in the oral Vedic tradition, with Vyasa-the-Arranger editing the Vedas into a final *Samhita* form. Bechert and Von Simon have placed the development of Sanskrit around the 2nd century BC. This is also the period when sculpted images appear. The Greco-Roman world was interacting with India at least since the time of Darius-I. Ashoka's Edict XIII mentions embassies to Syria, Egypt, Macedonia, Cyrene and Epirus. Bilingual (Greek and Aramaic) and Greek Edicts exist."Yavana" appears to describe all Mediterranean people. The MBH mentions Rome in the *Sabha Parva*, and Roman coins have been found at several archaeological sites in India. Philostratus (early 3rd century AD) in his *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*writes of a voyage to India for philosophical debate. *Yavanajataka* and *Romakasiddhanta* prove the Greco-Roman influence on astrology. Terms like "yavanika" show the influence of Greek drama. A Greek inscription in Kandahar authored by an Indian name (Sophitos son of Naratos) uses the opening verses of the *Odyssey* for his own woeful adventures.

Alonso finds as many as 97 major points of interconnection between Greek myth and the MBH.In both the gods plan the holocaust of power-drunk rulers to relieve the earth's burden and usher in a new age—that of the audience. Losses are exceptionally heavy on both sidesfrom the very young to the ancient.However, Alonso ignores a major difference. In Homer and Hesiod, Zeus manipulates the gods to shift the balance of battle daily. In Vyasa, the gods do not intervene during the war. Krishna, the devious avatar,makes the decisive moves and engineers a massacre of his own clan too. Long before the Trojan War, Zeus destroyed almost all mankind by a flood (as in the Sumerian *Gilgamesh*, the Biblical *Genesis* and the MBH's fish-avatar). Before Kurukshetra, Kshatriyas were annihilated in 21 battles in the previous yuga by another avatar, Parashurama. The Theban War in which Diomedes and Sthenelus fought precedes the Trojan War. Similarly, the Kurukshetra fratricide precedes the internecine massacre of Yadavas at Prabhasa.

Alonso quotes (p. 158) Sanjaya speaking to Dhritarashtra of the gods driving a person mad first, whom they wish to defeat (*Sabha Parva*, section

72), which could as well have been spoken by Agamemnon.Like gods espousing opposing camps in Homer, in Vyasa the devas incarnate as the Pandavas, Krishna and their allies, while the Asuras take possession of Kaurava heroes who are simultaneously incarnations of deities. As Zeus favours now one side then the other in battle, so Shiva empowers both Arjuna and Ashvatthama, is responsible for the births of Draupadi, Shikhandi, Gandhari's 100 sons and Samba who is responsible for the Yadava destruction. Shiva also has five Indras reborn as the Pandavas. The avatar Parashurama gives weapons to the Kaurava heroes Bhishma, Drona and Karna. Homeric and Vyasan gods provide opponents with special armour and weapons.

In both epics, heroes are born of intercourse between deities and humans. However, unlike Zeus, Indra plays no major role other than depriving Karna of his divine armour and earrings and gifting him an infallible missile. Alonso argues that the roles of Zeus and Athenaare paralleled by Krishna as "supernatural authority." However, as Bankim Chatterjee showed,[3] in the epic Krishna is overwhelmingly human, except in interpolated miraculous episodes. Further, there is no parallel in Homer to the "supernatural authority" being killed by a petty hunter. In both, exiled heroes gain allies through marriage, peace embassies fail and fratricidal war results.

A charismatic female figure of supernatural birth is the cause of the wars: Zeus' sole mortal daughter Helenandyajna-altar born Draupadi. Opposing them are half-god Achilles and Vasu-incarnate Bhishma. Just as Paris gazes on three naked goddesses with hubris, so does Mahabhisha on Ganga as the breeze uplifts her moon-white dress. Both face tragic consequences. Thetis, mother of Achilles, and Ganga, mother of Bhishma, are water goddesses who leave their husbands after delivering the hero on being stopped by the mortal spouse from drowning the child. Aeneas, son of Aphrodite and Anchises, is taken away at birth and returned later like Achilles and Bhishma. Neither hero marries. Both are the principal warriors of their armies, but are subordinate to lesser mortals who are kings. The egotistical refusals of both exacerbate the war. Karna abstains from fighting like Achilles. After a victory in daytime, Achilles and Bhishma receive a clandestine visitor at night from the opposite camp accompanied by a god (Hermes with Priam, Krishna with the Pandavas). The visit occurs at the end of the ninth year/day. Both die in the tenth year/day. Just as Apollo stands behind Paris guiding his arrow to kill Achilles, so Arjuna shoots from behind Shikhandi to fell Bhishma. Both heroes are overshadowed by an awareness of their tragic destiny. Ganga's lament at Bhishma's death has exact parallels in that of Thetis in the *Iliad.*

Both Agamemnon and Duryodhana insult their generals, defy supernatural powers and violate princesses (Briseis, Draupadi). In both cases, what the first messenger says is very similar and a god (Athena, Krishna) intervenes invisibly after interjection by an elder (Nestor, Vidura) fails. The commanders-in-chief of the victors (Agamemnon and Dhrishtadyumna) are murdered soon after victory, defenceless (drowned, suffocated).Both are closely linked to the heroine (Helen, Draupadi). Their fathers lose the kingdom to a brother (Atreus to Thyestes) or a close friend (Drupada to Drona). The child born for taking vengeance succeeds and is named after an animal (goat-Aegisthos, horse-Ashvatthama). Both Hector and Duryodhana wear impenetrable armour, flee, are killed because of a trick by a god (Athena, Krishna) and their bodies are abused by the victor.Achilles and Duryodhana are devastated by the deaths of their closest friends, Patroclus and Karna, both of whom initially withdraw from the battlefield. Both Patroclus and Karna are deprived of their birth-right and later regain royalty. Both lose the divine armour that protects them because of a god's trick (Apollo, Indra) and die because, ignoring warnings, they target the chief warrior of the opposing army (Hector, Arjuna). They have problems with their chariots in battle and die defenceless, rebuking their slayer. Immediately after their death, the charioteer drives off. Both Achilles and Krishna die when shot in the foot. Both Patroclus and Krishna leave instructions about their obsequies with their closest friend (Achilles, Arjuna).

In the *Thebaid*, Diomedes' father Tydeus eats the brains of Melanippus, as Bhima drinks Duhshasana's blood.Curses cause the deaths of the heroes in Thebes and Dvaraka.Both these impregnable citiesare demolished (so too are Troy and the Achaean encampment) and the women (of Troy and Dvaraka) looted. In both Thebes and Kurukshetra a group of 7 heroes is involved. With Krishna and Satyaki the Pandavas are 7, but Alonso is mistaken about Kritavarma leading a group of 7 kings on the Kaurava side. He merely leads the Yadava contingent.

The kings of Thebes and Hastinapura are blind, aged, do not fight, have numerous sons who pre-decease them. Their mothers are widows impregnated by a close relative of the husband. Both have a son who betrays them (Helenus, Yuyutsu) and is involved in their obsequies. Ominous portents attend the births of Paris and Duryodhana. Their wicked conduct is supported by their fathers. Dionysus blesses Apollo's son Anius, king of Delos, with endless food through his daughters, which feeds the Achaeans. Surya gifts Yudhishthira an inexhaustible cooking pot for the exile. In both cases there is an ordained period before which the war cannot occur (9-10 years for Thebes

and Troy; 13 for Kurukshetra; 36 for Dvaraka). Both wars end with massacres at night of sleeping soldiers and non-combatants. In the raid at night by Odysseus and Diomedes, Athena helps them. Ashvatthama, Kritavarma and Kripa are helped by Rudra. The killer has just one conversation with one of the victims who is immobilised, and then butchers the rest (Diomedes with Dolon, Ashvatthama with Dhrishtadyumna). In both the same character plays a critical role in the massacres: Diomedes at Thebes and Troy, along with Odysseus in the latter, and Kritavarma at Kurukshetra and at Prabhasa with Satyaki and Krishna.In Troy and Kurukshetra, the final massacre occurs through incursion by a "horse." Just as the wooden horse bears within it the killers, so Ashvatthama is infused with Rudra and carries ghouls with him. In Dvaraka the cause is a similar ruse (feigned pregnancy) that births the mortal club.

Dhrishtadyumna and Athena are born fully grown, armoured, with chariots, roaring. Draupadi, Helen and Pandora are irresistible beauties, agents of the gods for destruction on earth. Helen has three husbands; Draupadi has five. Each very harshly berates one husband, who withdraws from battle and is then visited by a mightier brother who has left the field to enquire after him, who draws a weapon, violently criticises his withdrawing and being in bed, reconciles and returns to the battle. Neither Menelaus nor Yudhishthira are notable warriors. Bothare indecisive, not spiteful like their brothers who criticise them, referring to violence against their wives. Agamemnon announces that they will return home if Menelaus is killed. Duryodhana plots the death/imprisonment of Yudhishthira for similar reasons.

Alonso brings in parallels between Heracles (half-divine, losing kingship as Eurystheus' birth is pre-maturely induced) and Yudhishthira (half-divine, not winning initially though Duryodhana's birth is delayed). During the father's exile, the hero is born by a god's intervention.The hero's uncle and his son deprive him of his birth-right. His mother has to live for long in the kingdom of his rival. The hero suffers a temporary madness because of which he has to travel through wild places, having many adventures (12 labours; Arjuna's 12 years of exile), and undergoes humiliating servitude in disguise for one year, living like a woman in a palace subject to a queen/princess. This ends with defeatingan enemy attacking that kingdom for cattle, restoration of true identity and weapons, and a marital union which propagates the dynasty, followed by vengeful extermination of the enemy in war. Heracles and Bhima are gourmands and cooks, prefer to fight with bare hands or primitive weapons and kill a tyrant who abuses a woman. Ovid's version of the Faunus-Omphale-Heracles story yields numerous parallels with the

Kichaka-Draupadi-Bhima episode. Both occur during a religious festival, there is reference to feasting, the violent ardour of the villain, the hero dressing as a woman and the encounter occurs in the dark.

Alonso makes a laboured attempt to equate Heracles' killing of Busiris and his attendants who shackle him for sacrifice with Bhima killing Kichaka's henchmen who try to sacrifice Draupadi. He points out that she is described as standing embracing a column, which is peculiar unless one recalls Heracles being bound to an altar or pillar for sacrifice! Both Bhima and Heracles are sought to be poisoned as infants, tread dangerous territories, battle monsters and supernatural beings, are described as having flames bursting from them. Cacus, a monster, steals cattle guarded by Heracles, is betrayed by his sister to Heracles, just as Hidimba does with Bhima against her rakshasa brother. Bhima rescues a Brahmin's daughter who is to be sent as Baka's meal, just as Heracles does with Hesione, daughter of Laomedon, about to be sacrificed to a monster. Again, moved by the sobs of Alcestis, he brings Admetus back from death, as Kunti is moved by the cries of the Brahmin family to have Bhima succour them. Savitri and Alcestis are another parallel as wives loyal unto and beyond death.

Alonso notes parallels between Jamadagni and Heracles. Both threaten the sun with arrows and receive a gift in return (a golden cup; a parasol and sandals). Alonso then draws a far-fetched parallel between Heracles and Karttavirya-Arjuna as both threaten the sea with arrows. One wonders why he has not drawn the parallel with Rama threatening the sea!

In Heracles' intimacy with his nephew and charioteer Iolaus, Alonso sees a clear parallel with Arjuna and Krishna. Heracles wins princess Iole in an archery contest, but has to leave without her, returns to kill her father (who was his weapons-trainer) and brothers and carry her off. Alonso draws a laboured parallel withArjuna killing Draupadi's suitors at Kurkshetra, even though he does not kill Drona, his weapons-guru.

Parallels are seen between Dionysus and Krishna. Both gods have to find refuge from persecution (by Jarasandha, Lycurgus) in the sea (Dvaraka, in Thetis' lap in the sea).Their enemies insult them (Shishupala, Pentheus) and suffer death (dismemberment of Jarasandha-Lycurgus; beheading of Shishupala-Pentheus) after a dramatic revelation of divinity. Surprisingly, Alonso does not refer to Megasthenes' record of Indians worshipping Heracles (Krishna/Balarama) and Dionysus (Shiva) to bolster his arguments.

Both epics stress a restoration of order on earth and in heaven after a long sequence of calamities culminating in a holocaust. The macrocosm and the

microcosm are in harmony. Indra's hubris vis-à-vis Shiva is ended, as is the reign of Asuras possessing mortals. Brahmins (Drona, Parashurama) who violate their dharma are reined in or slain along with their pupils. In both, the age of half-divine heroes and those born unnaturally (not womb-born) is brought to an end, as also direct interaction of gods with humans. Zeus specifically prohibits any child born of a god. Uma curses the devas to be childless.

In sum, the argument is that the MBH draws extensively on its authors' "fervour for the Homeric epics and…very diverse Greek sources" using them in versatile ways in the Pandava-Kaurava story beginning from its outline for destruction and its formulation, with supernatural interventions ensuring its end. The sheer bulk of the Greek presence leads Alonso to propose that the MBH was composed largely at one time with Greek texts in its authors' hands. The lack of archaeological evidence discounts the possibility of a real event providing the nucleus of the MBH. He calls for fresh research to map out, section by section, the Greco-Roman presence in the MBH. This will also identify components that stand outside this archive, e.g. incarnations, rebirth, the power of ascesis, the concept of sacrifice. Such a study can also lead to a re-look at lost Greek texts which seem to be embedded in the MBH (e.g. *Cypria*, *Thebaid*). Alonso claims to have discredited the hypothesis of Vyasa having influenced Homer. Yet, all the parallels he lists with masterly skill could easily argue that case.

Endnotes

[1] The 53rd Discourse, 6-7: "Homer's poetry is sung even in India, where they have translated it into their own speech and tongue… the people of India … are not unacquainted with the sufferings of Priam, the laments and wailings of Andromachê and Hecuba, and the valour of both Achilles and Hector… Moreover, I believe that many barbarians who are still more ignorant than those men of India have heard of the name of Homer, if nothing more…" http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Dio_Chrysostom/Discourses/53*.html#6

[2]Claudius Aelianus, *Varia Historiae*, Book 12, chapter 48, "The Indians sing the verses of Homer translated into their own language." http://penelope.uchicago.edu/aelian/varhist12.xhtml#chap48

[3]F. W. Alonso: *Mahabharata and Greek Mythology*, translated by Andrew Morrow, ed. Alf Hiltebeitel, Motilal Banarsidass, p. 75.

[4]This was in his French translation of Goressio's Italian translation of the Ramayanahttp://www.gutenberg.org/files/20479/20479-h/20479-h.htm

[5]Arthur Lillie: *Rama and Homer: An Argument that in the Indian Epics Homer found the theme of his two great poems*, London 1912.

[6]Josette Lallemant, "Une source de l'Eneide: le Mahabharata," *Latomus* 18, pp. 262-87 made use of Eugene Leveque's 1880 book studying the Indian, Greek , Italian and French myths cf. Alonso p. 494.

[7]G.E. Duckworth: "Turnus and Duryodhana," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philologi9cal Association* 92, pp. 81-127, cf. Alonso p. 489.

[8]Georges Dumezil: *Mythe et Epopee*, vol. 1, 1968 Paris, cf. Alonso p. 489.

[9]Alonso, *op.cit.*

[10]Various articles 1993 to 2002, cf. Alonso p. 484.

[11]Alonso p. 38, fn. 54.

[12] Pradip Bhattacharya (translator): *Bankimchandra Chatterjee's Krishna Charitra.* M.P. Birla Foundation, Calcutta. 1991.

Narrative strife: embedded values in invocations of classical Western and Indian epics

Dr. Papia Mitra

Four great epics –*Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* from India, *Iliad* and *Odyssey* from Greece– have shaped our understanding of what an epic is. The academic consensus is that they reflect a long gone mythic-heroic age; they form the cultural foundations of the nations that claim descent from the peoples they sing of; and it is impossible to create true epics sung over generations until given a written form in the modern age. What are known as 'epic conventions' are also similar in all four epics. However this paper will concentrate on the difference in openings of the primary Indian and Western epics. The Homeric epics begin in *media res*: much of the action had already happened and the opening will set out the course of further action. The Indian epics begin long after the events described had come to pass. Obviously in both cases the stories told had already receded into the past but the mode of opening provides a study in contrasts. In one set we are directly plunged into the outlook of the characters at a climactic moment of action without any background (though the targeted audience did not need to be told an already familiar tale), while in the other we are introduced to the main plot at several removes with a sage retelling a story he had heard in the past about the deeds of certain characters that have been deemed worthy of being recited. Consequently neither *Iliad* nor *Odyssey* are complete mythological cycles in themselves but slices of a greater story arc. But *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* tell a complete story each with the end of each epic marking an end of a yuga. The deities invoked by the poets to aid them are also asked to sing on different themes. The contrast in the beginnings of the two sets of epics are activity-oriented versus reflective.

The very terms 'epic' and'mahakavya' inform us of the matter of their text: they are poems telling a story. But not every poem can be categorised as such. In both Western and Indian culture the great primary epics possessed

certain similar characteristics which formed conventions for later poets and critics. Aristotle defines an epic as "imitation in verse of characters of higher type ... narrative in form ... no limits of time ... multiplicity of plots, each with its proper magnitude conduces grandeur of effect". Following Homer other critics have added conventions like beginning in *media res*, invocation, catalogue of heroes, stating the subject matter etc. Indian commentators and critics too have their own definitions. Dandin defines a mahakavya as a compostion in cantos , ... opening with a benediction, a salutation, or a naming of the principal theme, ... turning upon the fruition of the fourfold ends, ...pervaded allthrough with poetic sentiments and emotions;. (I. 14-19). Vishwanath more succinctly informs that it is a narrative poem divided into cantos where the hero possesses noble qualities and is of divine descent, or noble kshatriya family or king; hereeither *sringar* (love) *vir* (heroic) or *shanta* (tranquillity) will be the dominating *rasa* (essence/quality/mood) with the other two being subordinate rasas; the topic can be a historical event or well known story. It shall begin with salutation to gods and statement of the subject (VI: 302). But these are the definitions given by critics, not by the poets themselves. Indeed it is to be noted that epic is always set in the far past, at a mythical time when supernatural and natural planes were dimensions of each other, when deities and mortals interacted frequently and easily and which produced towering characters naturally. But once civilization became complex and literate no longer are primary epics possible; the simplicity of the heroic age is lost. But what they give us is the totality of human experience that adds something of extra value. Nevertheless, in spite of similarities, there are also differences among the Greek and Indian primary epics. This paper will focus oninvocation and opening scenes, specially in *Iliad* and *Mahabharata* which bring out the difference in cultural values.

All four epic poems begin with calling upon a deity for aid. However the difference is in the narrative style. *Iliad* begins with a plea to the Goddess to sing of the wrath of Achilles which destroyed thousands of Acheans. In *Odyssey* the Muse is asked to sing of the crafty man Odysseus and his deeds. We are thus plunged into the subject matter of the story directly. The narrative framework is fairly straightforward. Homer is the author. He does not present himself as the singer; instead it is the Muse or another Muse inspired poet who sings in his place. Nevertheless, he is always present as the omniscient third party outsider through whom we become acquainted with the narration. Similarly in both *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* the gods are saluted and called upon to enable the reciter to narrate the story. But in both the hearer/

reader is greatly removed from the actual poet who is never actually present. *Ramayana* begins with Valmiki asking Narada to tell him who is the perfect man possessing all excellent virtues; Narada declares that only Rama fits the criteria and recited his great deeds.Thus the original story is Narada's. Afterwards when Valmiki pronounced the first sloka in the world Bramha orders him to tell the story of Ram through this new verse form. Valmiki meditates on Rama and fills in the details of the story Narada had told him. Yet it is not even Valmiki's *Ramayana* that we know of. He taught it to Lava and Kusha who sang them in various assemblies. Then one day they went to the court of Rama where they sang this story which is the one we know. Strictly speaking therefore, neither the original text nor the narration is the poet's. What we get is absence of Valmiki and the interpretative song offered by young boys who belong to the dynasty they are singing about. *Mahabharata* framework is even more layered. The Pundit Souti comes to a forest where a 12 year long sacrifice was going on. The assembled sages ask him what he has been doing. He answers that he had travelled to the great Serpent sacrifice being held by Emperor Janamejoya and heard an account of the past from Vyasa which is called Mahabharata and then wandered in many pilgrimage spots before coming here. He inquires what story the sages wish to hear. They reply that they have heard of the greatness of Mahabharata which contains all four Vedas in itself and so they wish to hear that account of the past as recited by Vyasa. In this case there are multiple narratives. Vyasa, the forefather of Janamejoya, had created the *Mahabharata* from the history he knew of about his children and grandchildren.When Janamejoya had asked his ancestor Vyasa to tell the story of his family, it was Vyasa's disciple Vaisampayana who had actually recited it. Souti heard it from him. Souti then recited it to others. Thus we are not listening to Vyasa's song directly; instead it is another listener's interpretation of yet another's recital that constitutes the text. Even more fascinatingly we are informed that what Souti is reciting is a truncated version. Vyasa had written a Mahabharata of 60 lakh slokas. But it was divided among the world of gods, ancestors, gandharvas, and humans. Every world has its own narrator to tell the story. For the world of men Vaisampayana was the chosen narrator and it is his narration that Souti recites. (Adiparva I. 67-70). Thus for both *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* the primary narrator is someone else than the original poet. Within these two also there is a slight difference: in *Ramayana* the reciters and hearers all belong to the family that is the subject matter and it is recited in the royal palace; in *Mahabharata* though the poet and the first listener belong to the same family that is the subject-matter of the song and

the first recitation is at the royal court to tell the latter the glories of his dynasty, the second narration–which is the one the listeners/reader know about is told to a group of hermits far away from the tumults of war and family life having no connection with the dynasty. Homer's style is more novelistic; there is no doubt of what the narrator is going to sing about. But in Indian epics the singers are not sure what the subject matter should be; they are asked by their listeners to sing of a particular topic and only then do they launch upon it. They maintain the character of orally transmitted work..

A second difference lies in the point from where the epics begin. In Homer the narration begins in what is called in media res. In *Iliad* the war had been continuing for 9 long years; the epic is set only in the tenth year of war, that is after considerable action had already taken place, and the war will continue even after the epic action is finished. The poem itself actually begins with the cause of Achilles' anger. His quarrel with Agamemnonenrages him so much that he refuses to fight for the Greeks until his honour is restored. Homer also tells us of the future–this rage will lead to destruction of thousands of Acheans. In *Odyssey* the Muse is asked to begin from wherever she pleased and she is pleased to begin after Odysseus had undergone many tribulations already and is in danger. The epic then goes onto describe events that lie in the future of Odysseus' timeline. But in Indian epics we are far removed from the actual action since the storytelling takes place years afterward. In *Ramayana* when Valmiki first starts on his poem, the eponymous hero had already accomplished his deeds; these are not deeds to be done yet.Souti declares that *Mahabharata* is itihasa/ history which had been told by poets in the past, is sung by poets in the present and will be sung by poets in the future. The immediate excitement, so to speak, is over. *Ramayana* proper begins with Dasaratha ruling over Ayodhyaya but yearning for sons. *Mahabharata* itself is not sure what is the beginning of the text , and observes different pundits begins from different points (Adiparva I: 52); but the story proper does not begin with the royal family or war but with the story of creation itself. Such opening points tell us something of what the reciters and listeners value more. It is future action vs. looking back when everything is over. The very openings in Indian epics thus reflect the mood of quietude unlike in Western ones.

The sets of epics are thus action oriented vs. reflective; lack of time to think vs. pondering over consequences; vir rasa vs shanta rasa. In *Iliad* Apollo becomes angry and starts killing the Greeks which end in a great quarrel between the two leaders which in turn sets off a new course of action. The

story then builds up steadily to its climax. The audience of course knew what would happen after the opening conflict: Patroclus would die at the hands of Hector and Hector would be killed in revenge by Achilles; but that glorious Achilles would be killed by Paris and Troy would finally fall but the gods would bring doom on all the great heroes and Odysseus would have many adventures though finally after another great slaughter of fellow Greeks he would be reunited with his family. (If we take Romans who came into existence far later than Homer and his audience, into consideration it becomes more complicated since Romans knew that Trojan civilization and spirit would survive to become Roman empire and the blood of Priam and Hecuba would flow through the veins of the Caesars.). But the characters in the text do not know it and they rush into action.Aristotle says *Iliad* is simple and pathetic while *Odyssey* is complicated and ethical. (85); *Iliad* is termed pathetic in the sense that it is a tragic detailing of deaths of men full of potential and sorrow of those left behind while *Odyssey* is ethical because it shows how men bring their doom on themselves. Yet battle is the central concern because it is how the hero gains glory. So from the first virrasa dominates. In Indian epics on the other hand the sages reciting the story and those hearing it within the text are keenly aware that everything is already over so that the mood is more tranquil. Rama hears the song at the end of his life when there is peace prevailing. Though he is the hero of the song he already knows the future portrayed and so there is no cause for him to plunge into action. Janamejoyais anxious to know of the deeds of his ancestors because they are all dead. Vyasa has composed the story but is also a character in the text itself ; he now takes no part in the action not even telling the story. For him it is already history and not a call to future action. Thus though these songs are heroic the focus is on not on instant action but on shanta rasa. Anandabardhan observes that *Ramayana's* essence is karunarasa, as the text itself states that is how it originated but the essence of *Mahabharata* is shantarasa. Ordinary people plunge into this world to satisfy their desires without realizing their consequences. All desires and achievements ultimately vanish. Thus though the text contains many other rasas like sringara, vira at the end what is established is the predominance of shantarasa since the intent of the poet is to turn minds of men away from the material world to moksha. (461-476). The last theory is debatable but the presence of shanta rasa is only too evident. However *Ramayana* also possesses this quality of tranquillity at theend. Since there is nothing left to happen any more the mind of the audience is at peace.

The predominance of the differing rasas of the openings influences heroic attitude and reflect the moral values held important by the culture. The ideal hero differs in both sets. For the Greek hero glory is all and this glory can only be gained through physical prowess and defying death.The hero hazards his life in war and through his courage, endurance and skill wins honour. The ideal hero rushes into frenzied actions because the future is unknown. Achilles is the embodiment of this ideal. The son of a goddess he had been promised a short life but a glorious destiny. However when Agamemnon besmirched that warrior's glory, his wrath is great enough to turn away from the war and let Greeks die. But Agamemnon would not give way either : his sense of his own worth and consequent tribute due to him is as keen. "From beginning to end of the Iliad, Agamemnon and Achilles are locked in a high-stakes struggle for dominance in which they attempt to impose competing definitions of rightful leadership, using competing definitions of loss incurred and the nature of the compensation owed." (Wilson). When Agamemnon finally is forced to relent and offers to return the goods he had taken away Achilles refuses as he feels he cannot be adequately recompensated for the glory he had missed out on. The tragic effect occurs when his friend dies as a consequence of his refusal to fight; then he is roused to go to war. He slays Hector mercilessly and dishonours his body. He does this knowing that he is doomed to die shortly if he kills Hector. But to a warrior death is less important than avenging the stain to his honour. So too in *Odyssey* we learn, "That is the gods' work, spinning threads of deaththrough the lives of mortal men,and all to make a song for those to come".

In *Iliad* specially, Agamemnon and Achilles both clash over their perceived sense of honour which in this case revolves round the ownership of a slave girl. Though they are supposedly bound by a common cause and are battle-comrades, they are actually aggressive competitors in leadership stakes. Though it is agony for Achilles to sit idle when battle rages, what he loves is the thrill of battle itself; his concern is for his personal warrior glory and not that he is failing his fellow soldiers. *Iliad* is elevated to iconic status precisely because it reflects ancient Greek culture's "propensity to shame, sense of self as either superior and worthy of esteem or unworthy, vulnerability to slight and dishonour, and honorific violence" (Holoway). In comparison to Achilles Odysseus is more thoughtful but his story is also a series of frenzied actions which hardly allows us to draw our breath till we reach the end. As the very invocation tells us that he had sacked the city of Troy–the underlying implication is that he does so because that is what a Greek hero does to win prizes and cement his status. He too accepts the warrior code of violence

and shame, which is reflected in his murder of the slave girls in his palace at Ithaca. The slaves had accepted lovers without his permission which brings shame upon him and in order to regain his worth as master he hangs them.

On the other hand Indian epic heroes focus on dharma. Participating fearlessly in war is a part of their code of conduct. But that is not all. Rama is always driven by the sense of righteousness. At the very beginning of *Ramayana*, we are told that he is chosen as the hero of the epic precisely because he is the follower of dharma, teller of truth, adamant in performing his duty, a great warrior but never giving way to rage. His heroic journey starts as a protector rather than someone simply trying to prove his valour as a warrior, when he goes with Vishwamitra to protect the rishis. Pandavas are also cast as the upholders of the moral way of life against the unrighteous Kauravas which is why people are anxious to hear of their deeds. Yudhisthira is pictured at the beginning as the tree of righteousness. The path of dharma established is the justification of reciting the great song. To these heroes duty and honour are one and same, but that honour has greater dimensions than merely being a warrior. Tubb argues that heroism in *Mahabharata* is based on pride and though Yuddhisthira is also dharamaraja tranquillity is not his emotion at the end. However the epic is not focused on only one major character. If we take the whole epic into account then the mood is one of realization that all earthly pleasures do not last and a turning away from war and its glories.

Again, both sets of epic begin with intersection between the natural and supernatural world. In *Iliad*, the priest of Apollo came to the camp of Greeks to ransom his daughter who had been taken as a prize of war by Agamemnon. When his plea is rejected Apollo sends down a plague till Agamemnon was compelled to give up his prize. As compensation he takes away Achilles' slave girl. Achilles' pride as a warrior is wounded and he feels dishonoured since another warrior had dared to snatch his prize. This gives rise to his rage that would not compromise. On advice of his Goddess mother Thetis he refuses to fight for the Greeks even as Trojans attack them. For a warrior like him it is agony not to participate in battle, but his wrath at being considered lesser than Agamemnon is stronger; Thetis and Zeus both agree that it is an affront to his divine blood. Similarly Odyssey beginswith the Muse asked to sing of the journeys of the hero after he had sacked the holy city of Troy. We are also told that Odysseus is driven off course and has his companions destroyed because of rage of two gods: Apollo was angered by the behaviour of his companions and Poseidon by Odysseus' blinding of his

Cyclops son. In both the story begins with some affront committed against piety: in one a god is directly insulted and in another a sacred city has been destroyed and two immortals were offended by mortals transgressing against them. In contrast Indian epics begin with heavenly powers pleased with their champions. Narada the celestial sage exalts Rama as the perfect man because he is ever virtuous. In *Mahabharata* the setting is at a holy sacrifice and the Pandavas are the embodiments of virtue. In both the focus is on restoration and teaching of dharma.

Since all epics are works of art it is not surprising that their beginnings and endings are related. The *Iliad* had begun with the wrath of Achilles and it closes when that wrath had finally exhausted itself; but the story of the war and his own life would continue after the epic ends. The endless cycle of violence is not over. The *Odyssey* ends with the gods' intervention to end hostilities, but obviously the characters' lives would continue beyond that and society remains the same.The Indian epics neither begin nor end with war. *Ramayana*is encircled by two pictures of ideal society: Narada describes Ramrajya which is repeated at end of the epic; Lava and Kusha begins with description of the happy kingdom ruled over by Dasaratha and end with description of current happy kingdom ruled by Rama. *Mahabharata* opens and closes with sacrifices, with images of settled peaceful society following their dharma. The close relationship between ending and beginning again gives us a glimpse of differing cultural values. The Greek epics have opened in media res, and they appear to have ended that way too. In contrast the ending of Indian epics mark the end of a yuga and end in tranquillity. I would say that in Western epics, though the readers know that, yes,the hero's fame has outlived his mortality, but the hero himself does not know if his glory will survive him. So he rushes into frenzied action. But the concern of Indian epic heroes is how to be righteous; and the very beginning tells us that they have led their lives on that premise so that there is no need to hurry any more. Thus the epics present us vir rasa vs shanta rasa.

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Hindi Translations of Milton and Shakespeare: The Opening of *Paradise Lost* and Hamlet's Soliloquy, Act III, Scene III

Pratima Das

This paper is an attempt to translate into Hindi the Opening 26-lines of Paradise Lost, Book-I. One of the Major problems is what to do with the allusions and the network of references to Greek Judiac and Christian sources? Keep them as they are in the original or Indianize this allusive network? I have tried to keep close to the original but also feel that completely Indianizing it is also possible. My Hindi translations offer the original English version first, followed by Hindi renderings in Roman Script.

Original English Version:-

Invocation to *Paradise Lost*

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit/ Of that forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste

Brought death into the world, and all our woe,/With loss of Eden, till one greater Man

Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,/Sing heavenly Muse, that from the secret top

Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire/ That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed

In the beginning how the Heavens and Earth/Rose out of chaos: or, if Sion hill 10

Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flowed/ Fast by the oracle of God, I thence

Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,/That with no middle flight intends to soar

Above the Aonian mount, while it pursues/Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.

And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer/Before all temples the upright heart and pure,

Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first/Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,

Dove- like sat'st brooding on the vast Abyss,/And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark

Illumine, what is low raise and support;/That to the highth of this great argument

I may assert eternal Providence,/And justify the ways of God to men.

Hindi Translation

Vandana Paradise Lost Ki

Manushya ke pratham aagya bhangh se aur woh phal

Us nishidh pedh ka , jiske maranshil swad

Is prithvi par lekar aayi mrithyu

Aur hamare sab dukh-dard ,

Eden ke patan se

Jab tak Aadam se mahan manushya

Punah sthapan kare hamey param-sukh aasan mein

Vagh-devi aur bhagwan ke geet-gaye , rehasyamay sheersh se

Aureb aur senai parvat se , anuprerit karei

Mauses Charwahe ko , jisne sarva-pratham uus

Chuney huye ghosti ko sikhaya

Aaadi mein kis prakar woh swarg aur prithvi

Uday huye brishkhinkhalta se, ya agar Seon parvat

Prabhu aapko jyada aanandit kare

Aur silowa ki jal-dhara bahe

Bhagwan ke mandir ke aakashwani ke pas se ; Main isliye

Vinti karta hun aapke sahare ka , mere saahasik geet ke liye

Mere geet madhyam-marg nahin chahtey balki aatikram karey

Aayoniyan pahar ke upar se , jab wo koshish kare

Vah cheezay jinhe aabhi tak gadh-aur-padh mein likha nahi gaya
Aur pradhanatha Aap , O! Parmatma jo pasand kare
Sab Mandiron se pehle sacche aur shudh hridhya ko ,
Mujhe aadesh de ; kyonki aap sarvagyani ; aap prarambh se hi
Upasthith thein , aur apney parakrami pankho ko felaye hue
Kabuter – pakshi ki tarah baithkar soche aadim andhere par
Aur use garvawati banaya : jo mujhme hain aandhera
Prajwalit karo, jo nimngami aur durbal , usko uthayo
Aur sahara do; taki main
Is mahan vitark ke bulandi tak pohunchu
Main shayad kah saku bhagwan ke chirkalin prayog
Aur bhagwan ke manushyo ke liye riti-nitiyo ko nyay-sangat bata saku|

.....

Translating Shakespeare from English to Hindi has been my long term project . My earlier attempt of translating Hamlet's two Soliloquies have already been published in the *International Journal of Cultural Studies and Social Science's* Volume II , Number V . Those two Soliloquie's are "O, that this too too Sullied flesh would melt" from Act I Scene II and another one from Act III Scene I which is perhaps the most popular Soliloquy in the world, "To be or Not to be … that is the question".

This is my latest attempt focusing on Act III ,Scene III where Hamlet while on the way to meet his mother in her bedroom comes upon the contrite figure of his uncle Claudius praying to god. Claudius is here tormented by his crime and desperately tries to pray and seek the Divinity's blessings. It is at this juncture that the prince sees Claudius kneeling with his back towards Hamlet. It is a rare opportunity when the king is un-guarded and open to sudden attack. Hamlet here finds this opportunity and is about to strike down the king when he thinks about the action that he is about to perform and finally gives up the idea of killing his uncle. He feels that when Claudius killed his brother, Hamlet's father was full of all his sins and had no time to confess and purify himself before Church and God. With all his sins on his back Hamlet's father was sent off to Hell. If Hamlet kills his uncle now when he is praying and not involved in any sinful act, Claudius would immediately go to Heaven. This will not be then an act of revenge but an act which rewards Claudius with Heaven . So, Hamlet decides to find another occasion when

Claudius is performing some sinful act like gambling or making love to his brother's wife who is now his wife. If killed then, Claudius would immediately go to Hell and Hamlet's revenge will be appropriate.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH VERSION : -

Enter Hamlet

HAMLET

Now might I do it . But now 'a is –praying.
And now I'll do it [*Draws Sword.*] – and so' a goes to
Heaven,
And so am I revenged! That would be scanned:
A Villain kills my father, and for that
I, his sole son , do this same villain send
To Heaven .
Why, this is base and silly , not revenge .
' A took my father grossly full of bread
With all his crimes broad blown , as flush as May,
And how his audit stands who knows, save heaven ,
But in our circumstance and course of thought
'Tis heavy with him. And am I then revenged
To take him in the purging of his soul
When he is fit and seasoned for his passage?
No. [*Sheathes sword.*]
Up sword ,and know thou a more horrid hent
When he is drunk, asleep or in his rage ,
Or in th'incestuous pleasure of his bed ,
At game a-swearing, or about some act
That has no relish of salvation in't.
Then trip him that his heels may kick at heaven
And that his soul may be as dammed and black
As hell whereto it goes. My mother stays ;
This physic but prolongs thy sickly days . Exit.

Hindi Translation:-

Hamlet ka pravesh

Hamlet

Aab main yeh kar sakta hun| lekin abhi to woh, prarthana kar raha hain|

Aur abhi main yeh karunga [*talwar nikalta hain*] —

Aur parinam mein woh jayega

Swarg

Aur yeh mera badla hoga! Yeh soch –vichar ki baat hain:

Ek villain ne mere pitaji ko maar dala

Aur uske liye

Main, unka ekmatra putra, yeh karke usi shaitan ko bhejunga Swarg mein|

Kyun yeh sab bekar, anuchit aur bevkoofi hain, badla nahi|

Isne mere pitaji ko mara, jab ve puri tarah paap mein dube thein

Jab unhone koi vrat ya paschatap, prayashchit bhi nahin kiya tha

Unke sare paap karmo sahit phale-phule thein

Aur unke karm unhe kahan le gaye, kaun jane,

Sirf Swarg hi jane,

Lekin hamare paristithi aur soch-vichar se

Mere pitaji ke paap unhe narak le gaye

Aur phir kya mera badla lena hua

Chacha ko marna, jab woh prarthana kar Aatma sudhi me rat hain

Jab unka hriday saaf ho

Jab ve prarthana se sudh, upyukt aur prastut ho Swarg ki yatra ke liye?

Nahin| [*Talwar ghusata hain*]

Talwar uthaunga main, aur unpar bhayankar, vibhatsya aakraman karunga

Jab ve sharab ke nashe mein chur, nind mein ya madhmast rahenge,

Ya jab ve mere Maa ke sath bistar par avaidh sangam kar rahe honge;

Chausar ke khel mein baazi lagane mein magna ho, ya aise karmo mein leen,

Jisme moksh ki gandh matra bhi na ho|

Tab unhe tangri maaru taki latpat karke uske aeriya laat mare Swarg ko

Aur taki uski aatma kalushit aur kaali ho

Narak ki tarah jahan ve jaa rahe hain|
Maa mera intezar kar rahi hain;
Yeh dawai maine thik kiya, jisne chachaki bimari ko lambi
Aur mrityu ko bhayankar kiya|
(Prasthan)

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Rust in the Sword of Dharma: A Critical Response to the Idea of Heroism in the *Mahabharata*

Raj Raj Mukhopadhyay

Introduction:

The central point (*kendra*) of the *Mahabharata*, upon which the entire epic revolves is undoubtedly the codes of Dharma and the heroic conduct. These two concepts are interlaced with the general assumption that in order to perform heroic deeds one must follow the laws of Dharma. The concept of Dharma is different from that of religion. Whereas religion is prefigured or regarded as an institution that expresses belief in a distinct divine power having a particular mode of worship, Dharma is associated with virtue, righteousness, and moral duties. Dharma is considered as an operative base for the ancient Hindu way of life and is fundamentally an indispensible part of the social life portrayed in *Mahabharata.* Iván Kovács observes

> Dharma is the moral law combined with spiritual discipline that guides one's life. Hindus consider dharma the very foundation of life. It means that which holds the people of this world and the whole creation. Dharma is the 'law of being' without which things cannot exist (30).

In the *Mahabharata*, we get a similar definition,

> Dharma is so called because it sustains and upholds the people: hence whatever sustains is dharma—this is certain (*Shantiparva*, 109.14).

The principal characters in the *Mahabharata* are 'Kshatriyas' (the second order in the Hindu *varna* system) or the warrior class who should follow their norms in order to achieve the status of the hero (*veer*). The characters like Arjuna, Karna, Bhishma, Bhima etal exhibit traits of heroic valour and bravery that effectively foregrounds their position, earnest efforts, and firm

belief in the path of Dharma. In spite of their heroic attributes, they lack the integral virtue to a considerable extent, which brings to the surface their vulnerability in the face of mundane motives and satisfaction. Various actions and incidents interrogate the inherent complexities involved within the interconnectedness of Dharma and heroism. The representation of the protagonists and their respective activities trace the extent to which Dharma is followed and how the unrestrained pursuit of heroism negates the basic principle of Dharma.

Breaking the Codes of War:

In the *Mahabharata*, we witness the struggle between 'dharma' (righteousness) and 'adharma' (unrighteousness) not only during the Kurukshetra war but also in various incidents throughout the entire epic. The war (*dharmayuddha*) itself was not any mere battle arising from the feud between two families but an essential process by which Dharma had to be established. The complex understanding lies in the fact that in order to establish Dharma, the path of adharma is often followed as a means or strategic move which is regarded as necessary. In ancient India, Chanakya had demonstrated the effective implementation of shrewd political strategies in order to overcome one's enemies or opponents either in a war or in daily encounters. The figure of Sri Krishna in *Mahabharata* exhibits the efficacious display of 'chanakyaneeti' or the systematic and skillful plan of actions (as presented in *Arthashastra*) that is crucial to achieve victory over adharma. However, the projection of this strategic consideration is imbued with ambivalence that demands a critical scrutiny. It also raises questions which are fundamental to the concept of heroism and the nodal point of attaining victory in a battle where skilled plan of action is more important than performing heroic deeds. Torkel Brekke has observed,

> There is a tension throughout the *Mahabharata* between heroism and prudence, between the tradition that sees war as a duty according to dharma and the tradition that sees war as a means to the ends of security and prosperity, according to the *Arthashastra* or the science of politics (44).

In the *Dronaparva*, Krishna breaks his oath of not participating in the war in order to save Arjuna's life by resisting the "Vaishnav-Ankusha" weapon. Moreover, he also assisted Arjuna to kill Jayadrath by covering the sun so that it can seem that the day is over and the sun has set. These actions were crucial in the action of the epic directing the course of events to a great

degree. If Krishna had not resisted Bhagdatta's powerful weapon or helped Arjuna to avenge the death of Abhimanyu by killing Jayadrath, then Arjuna would have died and Kauravas would have emerged victorious in the war. Therefore, Krishna's active participation in the Kurukshetra war was direly necessary for the Pandavas to win the battle and simultaneously, to establish Dharma. Nevertheless, Krishna's active involvement in the course of events may mar the heroic credentials of Arjuna, as we find Arjuna demanding a justification for such acts. It can be stated that the establishment of Dharma (*dharmasamsthapana* as in *Bhagvad Gita*, IV.8) was much more important in the times of *Mahabharata* than unique glorification of any individual hero. Regarding this discussion, Ganesan Aarathi has shown the disparity between the perception of Krishna and Arjuna:

> Over here we see that Krishna is far more concerned with war than anything else as is indicated in his infamous statement, "the end justifies the means". However, being divine, Krishna is merely reinstating equilibrium in the world, he has no emotional stake. Arjuna on the other hand, is innocently human, for him the means are far too violent, far too ethically invalid to possibly justify the end (17).

The unrighteous killing of Abhimanyu can also be considered as breaking the basic codes of war, where an individual cannot be attacked by a group of warriors. The Kauravas including great warriors like Drona, Karna, Duryodhana, Shakuni, Kripa all killed Abhimanyu together, who was fighting alone. This unjust act is a complete breach of *kshatradharma* where a true Kshatriya warrior can never kill someone in distress. However, Arjuna's killing of Bhurishraba and Karna can be perceived as counterbalancing the act of adharma which the Kauravas had done to his son, Abhimanyu. It is interesting to note that in order to kill Bhurishraba and Karna, Arjuna too had to breach the code of his *kshatradharma* that prohibits the killing of any person who is in trouble or affliction. Krishna's role was also instrumental in the death of Drona, the Kaurava commander as he conceived a plan to kill Drona by taking the help of *mithya* (falsity). It is also significant how the Pandavas agreed to Krishna's plot including Yudhishthira, the great embodiment of virtue. Dhristadyumna murdered Drona the same way in which Satyaki had beheaded Bhurishraba, with uncontrollable rage. The death of Drona in the hands of Dhristadyumna can be regarded as a retributive justice as Dhristadyumna's father King Drupada was killed by Drona in the war. However, this violent act of retribution continued till the end as we find

Ashvatthama murdering Dhristadyumna to avenge the death of his father, Drona. Therefore, these acts of retribution and vengeance initiated a long chain of cruelty and bloodshed that resulted in the murdering of kinsmen, one after the other. This bears a striking resemblance with the story of the 'House of Atreus' in Greek mythology, where every person has soaked his or her hand with the blood of their kinsmen. In *Mahabharata* too, all these Kshatriya warriors were engaged in counterbalancing the act of violence and adharma, and in the way they did not hesitate to break the codes of war and Dharma.

The killing of Duryodhana by Bhima and extermination of the entire Pandava soldiers by Ashvatthama can be cited as the most pernicious acts of murder. In the *Shalyaparva*, with Krishna's instructions, Bhima broke the thigh of Duryodhana which was absolutely prohibited in a mace-duel. Hence, in this way Bhima not only broke the warrior code but also took help of unfair means, which was indeed 'adharma' and was completely forbidden in *nyaya yuddha* (or the just-war). This adoption of unfair means is also reflected in the acts of Ashvatthama who silently breached the Pandava camp in the middle of the night and insisted that Kripacharya and Kritavarma assist him in conducting the genocide of the remaining warriors of Pandava camps. The possible justification for these heinous crimes which can be provided both by Bhima and Ashvatthama is that they executed these murders only to fulfill their respective oaths. These regressive activities question the heroism of these individuals who, in the name of establishing 'dharma' have engaged themselves in 'adharma' instead.

However, the first instance of 'adharma' in *Mahabharata* is the disrobing of Draupadi by Dushasana. Insulting a woman is considered as a terrible sin and Dushasana, by conducting that crime brought the curse upon himself and on the entire Kaurava clan. However, the Pandavas were silent and did not protest when their wife was being molested. In fact, except Vidura and Vikarna, all the other people present at the court did not try to stop Dushasana from committing the heinous act. When Bhima became angry on Yudhishthira for his cold acceptance of the entire situation, Arjuna stopped him by saying that Yudhishthira had actually played the dice game only to protect his own 'dharma'. This justification is indeed fragile and imperfect as the dharma which forbids a hero to resist the humiliation of his own wife can never be regarded as righteousness and therefore, it is indeed 'adharma' to silently witness the anguish and torment of a woman. Bhima attains retribution only after sucking the blood of Dushasana and breaking the thigh of Duryodhana as he had promised to Draupadi.

Interrogating Dharma- the Unheroic Heroes:

The interlacing of the concept of Dharma and the idea of heroism is located at a pivotal point in the *Mahabharata*, which is considered as the reflection of heroic ideals and virtues. There is no complete and systematic presentation of this system (*kshatradharma*) in the epic but the references are so numerous that the readers get a fair idea of an extensive set of specific rules (Brekke, 44). However, various actions and events in the *Mahabharata* delineate the antithetical attitudes of the epic heroes towards the normative standards of heroic conduct, which in turn problematizes the notion of Dharma. Several events move us to contemplate about the ideals of Dharma and heroism and to what extent those codes of conduct were properly followed by the principal characters. When Arjuna was reluctant to fight against his own kin, Krishna teaches him to follow his own *kshatradharma*. However, various tactics adopted by Krishna during the war in order to favour the Pandavas explicitly renders the violation of dharmic codes. Other characters also exhibit flaws that neither follow the heroic conduct nor the principles of Dharma. In this context, it is important to notice the difference between the Greek concept of heroism and the heroic valor depicted in the *Mahabharata.* The 'hero' is a term generally conferred upon all Greeks who fought at the battle of Troy; similarly as the Sanskrit term *veera* is used for all the brave heroes in *Mahabharata*. To be precise, in Greek literature 'hero' is a comprehensive term that was used to denote any stalwart regardless of his status or function. In the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, we come across heroic figures like Achilles, Hector, Ajax and Odysseus who demonstrate great feats in the war. C. M. Bowra has rightly observed,

> The Greeks of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. regarded the men whom Homer had called heroes - *eros* - as a generation of superior beings who sought and deserved honour. (Quoted in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (1913) by James Hastings)

However, the Indian concept of heroism is distinct in the sense that it incorporates the ideals of Dharma. Performing heroic deeds is not the only indispensible criteria for an individual to be considered as a 'hero' but his actions should necessarily follow the teachings and values of Dharma. If the actions of any person violates the basic codes of Dharma then he is not worthy to be considered as a hero. The exalted principles of Dharma render the ways of human life and the general interpretations of this concept apotheosize figures like Yudhishthira or Bhishma. A. C. Haddon's definition[1] is significant in this regard,

> The term 'hero' is usually applied to one who stands out from among ordinary mortals by his superior quality or qualities, conspicuous bravery or sustained power of endurance being the distinguishing features. But there is a large class of persons in oral tradition and literature who stand out from their fellows by reason of their inventiveness, or moral or intellectual qualities, by the introduction of new cults, and, above all, by what they have done to improve the various conditions of human existence. These are usually spoken of as 'culture- heroes'. . . A hero is nearly always regarded as the spirit of a dead man. His origin may be unknown; his mortal birth may be recorded; or he may have had an equivocal begetting, being the son of a virgin, or of - partly divine and partly human parentage; or, again, he may be the son of a mortal amongst mortals and died as they do (633).

Therefore, individuals like Arjuna, Bhîma, Karna, Bhishma, Drona, Ashvatthama, Abhimanyu are actually 'culture-heroes' who present bravery, dauntlessness and distinct skills in archery in the Kurukshetra war- the essential qualities which would confer upon them the status of hero. Furthermore, the Pandavas (including Karna) were born with divine parentage, each of them having respective gods as their father. (such as Surya in case of Karna, Pavandeva for Bhima, Indra in case of Arjuna etc.) However, several representations of their characters do not go in accordance with the values of Dharma and hence, problematize the notion of heroism attributed to them. The inherent faults in their characters depict the complex shades of human nature, which becomes vulnerable in the face of vice, greed, envy and anger. It was not heroic on the part of the Pandavas to silently accept Draupadi's humiliation in front of the entire assembly hall. It would have been an act of heroism if the Pandavas had struck a decisive blow to Dushasana at the very moment when he proceeded to disrobe Draupadi. Yudhisthira, although being a virtuous man was overcome with obstinacy during the dice game and he lost all his possessions as consequence. He also succumbed to untruth in order to kill Drona and gave up his esteemed ideals of truth and dharma because of his desire for victory. To a certain degree, he is overpowered with 'adharma' which questions the noble and lofty state of his being the epitome of Dharma. Karna, who is known for his benevolence and sacrifice, took part in the killing of Abhimanyu which goes against the laws of Dharma. Bhima being the most powerful warrior did a terrible sin by breaking Duryodhana's thigh only to satisfy his vengeance. Although Ashvatthama was a notable warrior, he was afraid to face the Pandavas and hastily charged the "Brahmashira" weapon without being able to revert it.

Bhishma despite his love for the Pandavas, his grandsons, took the side of the Kauravas knowing well that he was on the wrong side and it was Duryodhana's arrogance which had culminated in the war.

Thus, the sordid actions of these so-called heroes interrogate the implementation of the codes of Dharma, which had no profound impact on the proceedings of the war- the very war that was fought with a view to establish Dharma itself. Basically, these are 'unheroic' acts done by great Kshatriya warriors whose primary task was to protect the dharma and properly follow its principles. The warrior code (*kshatradharma*) is breached a number of times in the epic and Torkel Brekke rightly comments,

> …there is a deep tension between two visions of the ethics of war in the story. On the one hand, there is a great sense of honour surrounding the knowledge of and internalization of the rules contained in the warrior code. This tension is one of several deep contradictions of the political and social vision of the *Mahabharata*. The tension between the consequentialist and deontological morality within the world of the *kshatradharma* may have some connections to the tensions within the crucial notion of dharma (59-60).

From the above analytical discussion, it is evident that the idea of heroism is a kaleidoscopic one-a variegated, changing pattern of individual and collective representations of social values and morals.

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Theatrical Performance as a Spacio-Temporal Act: Reassessing the text of Bharata Muni's *Nâtyasâstra*

Aisik Maity

Aristotle's *Poetics* and Bharata's *Nâmyaúâstra* occupy similar positions of importance in European and Indian theatrical aesthetics respectively. The *Nâmyaúâstra*, the theory of drama, encompasses a comprehensive account of everything from the preliminaries of the sacred rituals engaged in the theatrical process to the various forms of acting to the technical designs related to the stage. The text is constructed as a conversation between a sage Bharata and his disciples; the author being a figure of mythical recognition, the one who is ascribed with the literary invention of dramatic performance. Compositions for dramatic performance and techniques of staging in ancient India are derived primarily from two sources, as the critic KapilaVatsyayan has pointed out, – extant plays with their stage directions and numerous dramaturgical texts and books of theory and criticism.

The text displays an integrated vision within a definite structural casement and a procedure of discourse, which can be read on multiple levels of interpretation. Vatsyayan aptly notes, "Bharata's organizational pattern is also circular like his notion of plot (*itivrtta*)."

The word *Rasa* embodies an intertwined significance – of space, time, thematic emotions and consequent formulations of ideas of novelty. Moreover the aphorism operates on complex levels as elucidated in the most celebrated sixth chapter of the *Natyasastra* –"Rasa arises from the conjunction of factors, reactions and transitory emotions- epitomizing theatrical experience." Abhinavagupta has developed the profound idea of Rasa into a "subtle and self-contained system of aesthetic analysis of audience participation in a theatrical event", as a matter of cognition, as the result of a perception devoid of material obstacles.

Theatre in India is a composite art form in the harmonious fusion of elements from dance, music, pantomime, epic and ballad recitations, graphic and plastic arts and ritual[1]. In the *Natyasastra,* Bharata blends eight basic human feelings which – the "Permanent Mental States"- are Delight, Laughter, Sorrow, Anger, Heroism, Fear, Disgust and Astonishment. These feelings when metamorphosed within dramatic terms of reference into *Rasas*, become the Erotic, the Comic, the Pathetic, the Furious, the Heroic, the Terrible, the Odious, and the Marvelous. A ninth rasa – Quietistic - has also been added later by Abhinavagupta. However it has also been pointed out by Schechner that *shanta*does not correspond to any particular *sthayibhava*. Rather it is a "transcendent rasa" which absorbs and eliminates the other rasas. He also notes, "A perfect performance would not transmit or express *shanta* but allow *shanta* to be experienced simultaneously and absolutely by performers and partakers." Thus the *bhava* and the rasa have a relationship, which is instrumental in the structural development of the dramatic plot, the *itivritta*.In identifying analogies between presumptions about theatricality in the Sanskrit treatise on dramaturgy and those of the Elizabethan theatre, John Russel Brown also observes in ***Shakespeare, the Natyasastra and Discovering Rasa for Performance***, that the concept of rasa as the determining emotion of a performance is similar to that of the Elizabethan "humour" or "prevailing passion" as defined by Ben Jonson. The *Nâmyaúâstra* also raises the question whether *bhâvas* originate from *rasas*, or whether they are "mutually constitutive". Abhinavagupta has defended the unidirectional "*bhava*-leads-to-rasa doctrine", as Whitney Cox notes, "but seems sheepishly attracted to the idea of *parasparasambandha* (the *bhavas* only acquire their significative ability in the wider context of a dramatic performance, and so derive from their innate connection with *rasa*)."

The *bija* or the seed, according to Bharata, is the underlying cause of theatrical experience. The world becomes an organism, the integrated structure of which is interdependent. The procedure of growth, "the proliferation of each part being distinct and different, and yet developing from the same unitary source", is of fundamental importance.Vatsyayan points out that the three principles which emerge from the single notion of the *bija* are "process, organic interconnectedness of the parts and the whole, and a continuous but well defined course of growth, decay and renewal." Thus the text employs this metaphor to indicate a process of growth and renewal, in order to explain the nature of the universe of theatrical aesthetics. Also Bharata has constantly tried to bring in the dichotomy between the *vyakta* and the

avyakta, which reaches a harmonious culmination in the performance. Significantly, he makes discourse on the multi- dimensional nature of time, through the understanding of the three significant concepts- *avastha* ,*arthaprakriti* and *sandhi.* Each of these categories has layers of perception underlying them, and can be conjoined to form multiple configurative structures within the dramatic rhetoric. Initially, the *avastha*, the movement is from the perspective of the protagonist. This includes five stages: *arambha*, *prayatna*, *praptisambhava*, *niyataphalaprapti* and *phalyoga.* Next comes the *arthaprakriti* which is the nature of the movement of the theme, which is ever expanding as a reflection of the cosmic *vistara*. Thirdly the *sandhis* indicate an important union of all these elements though the singular metaphor of the *purusa.* The *mukha*, *pratimukha*, *garbha* are the constitutive factors of the concept. Time is presented as linear, yet within the integrated circular structure.

The thirty six chapters of the *Nâtyasâstra* can be viewed from three perspectives, the artistic experience from the creator's point; the artistic content or states of being which facilitate the return to the elemental emotive processes and the structure of the dramatic form on which the content is built.

CHAPTERS	**ASPECTS DISCUSSED[1]**
I, II, III, IV, V	Relations between space and time outlined
VI and VII	Life is abstracted into a spectrum of *rasa*, *bhava* and their variations.
VIII to XIII	All aspects of body language.
XIV to XIX	Deal with verbal aspects- sound and speech *(vacika)*
XX to XXI	Deal with the structure of the dramatic performance, types of plays and the multilayered movement of the plot. Time is the primary concern.
XXII to XXVI	Matters related to the other two instrumentalities of expression – costuming and décor (XIII) and *sattvika* (XXIV)
XXVIII to XXXIII	Devoted to music
XXIV and XXV	Distribution of roles and organization.

XXXVI	Marks the completion of the cyclical path of the text by returning to the origin of drama and its descent from the heavens.

(*from K Vatsyayan's book on the* ***Nâtyasâstra***)

The physical space needed to be consecrated in ancient theatrical practice – it was a universal phenomenon – as it had a sacred significance. Bharata has laid down the broaderparadigms of the procedure of replication of the divine cosmos in a finite structure limited by space and time. Concepts of time, space and their relationship with art depends on the cultural landscape inhabited by the performers and the audience. Significantly the dimensions of ontology as implemented by the *Nâtyasâstra* largely derive from the *brahma mandala* concept. The concept of VastuPurusa Mandala which is a composite of the three words – *vastu* (residence), *purusa* (the Divine Cosmic Essence) and *mandala* (the ritual diagram or plan which directs the existence of a sacred site), assumes primary importance in Sanskrit theatrical practice.

The stage as mentioned previously was charged with a cosmic significance and the actor had to perform certain rites which marked his entry from the real world to the world revolving around the sacred. The performance was a visual offering to the deity, thus the actor, before the event, had to observe certain rituals which marked the obliteration of his self which was encapsulated in reality, in order to permeate into a state of transition. Victor Turner in the context of *Kutiyattam* has noted that "[the actor] is ambiguous, neither here nor there, betwixt and between all points of classification." The *Nâtyasâstra's* approach to the engagement of the body in performance is inherently multilayered, which also results in problems in the isolation of particularly individual components that are instrumental in the development of the actors' imaginative faculties.

Richard Schechner in "***Rasaesthetics***" has noted the location of the body in theatrical execution in the context of the *Nâtyasâstra.* He has emphasized on the internalization of the performance on part of the actor, that is, he demarcates between the European theatre and Sanskrit theatre in the context of location of the body in theatricality.

The *Nâtyasâstra* discusses the architectural aspects as well when it comes to the dimensions of space in the theatre. Durgadas Mukhopadhyay in ***"Ancient Indian Stage and its Convention"***, has observed with reference to the *Natyasasatra*,

> *"In constructing a playhouse, it is necessary to first examine the soil. The earth must be ploughed properly and cleansed of all the impurities like stones, gravels, bones and grass. Then in the Pusya constellation of the stars, it must be measured with a white thread. The pillars may be erected in the Rohini or Šravana constellation. Emphasis is given on the selection of hard land, cleared from impurities and fixing definite boundaries with a thread, so that the prescribed measurements are adhered to."* Thus, it packs in a number of ritualistic complexities, which are noticeably not present to a considerable extent in Western theatrical practice.

Indian dramatic tradition entails another significant search – a constant striving to unite with the *purna* or *akhanda*, the trans-personal ideal – the *"I"*. The stage is to be experienced, through the multiplicity of forms which it expresses, with their mythic and human typologies, restating the experience of *bhava*. The entire phenomenon which embodies a trans-physical importance is enacted on the stage by the actors who aim to recreate time and space through a multitude of conventions. Normal space-time continuum ceases, and a timeless order predominates the performance, the "sacred time." The audience automatically is trans-located to such a world. Another character who assumes importance in this context is the *vidusaka* (the jester). In the words of Richmond and Richmond,

> *"The vidusaka is in a position to recreate the original disorder. He has a powerful weapon at his disposal. Cosmic and social order are destroyed and chaos is come again: that great yawning abyss, symbolic of the original unformed matter, or nothingness, of complete annihilation. The pollution is total. Only through very special consecration rites can the temple and the universe be restored and made sacred again."*

The *Nâtyasâstra* remarkably illustrates the functional modalities of theatrical performance as a spacio-temporal event. What becomes central to the understanding of the dimensions of time and space is the cultural position of the *Nâmyaúâstra.* The text is replete with measurements, classifications and definitions of the emotional states in the theatrical performance. Ralph Yarrow has pointed out in ***Zero Plus One: Beckett and the Nâtyasâstra***,"

> *The common question is: what are the ground conditions for the generation, stimulation and reception of imaginative worlds, by creation of signs and meanings, the materialization of forms and relationships? By implication, these will give rise to the intelligent body of the performer and the active body of the receiver."*

Vatsyayan notes, "How can one conclude or come to the conclusion on the ever flowing stream of the *Nâtyasâstra? …*The analogy of streams, confluences (*prayaga*) and the continuous flowing and yet changing nature of the river is the closest approximation by which the *parampara* of the *Nâtyasâstra,* the text and the dynamics of inflow confluences, outflow and the ultimate inflows into the ocean, can be explained." The *Nâtyasâstra* as a text incorporates essential concepts of time and space which are intrinsic to the Indian understanding of the divine and the human. Scholars and interpreters of the text, most importantly Abhinavagupta, have repeatedly positioned their argument that the performance becomes a direct conjunctive experience of the Absolute being manifested in the dimensions of the theatrical space and the categorical formulations of *rasa*, which have transformative effects on both the actors and the audience. *Rasa* is not limited by spatial and temporal functions – it is an imitation : its operation temporarily follows that of the actualities of life. Paradoxically, the theatrical performance is directly associated with the space-time continuum. As Bharata says, "There is no *natya* without rasa."

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The Role of Gods and Goddesses in the *Iliad* and the *Mahabharata*

Lopamudra Dey

The epic is mostly the compilation of heroic deeds and the narration of heroic events. In the epics super humans and the gods play a major role. The aim of writing an epic was 'to embody the spirit of progress', feeling the value of life and trying to make it better by combining a spirit of intense enjoyment with wisdom. The epics aimed to focus on human error,frailty, suffering, misfortunes and show how the epic heroes fought for justice, morality and righteousness. In their great journeys, gods either empower them with their blessings or ruin them through their wrath. This is noticed in both the western and eastern epics. For my discussion I have chosen the *Iliad* and the *Mahabharata*.

The *Iliad*covers only a few months during the tenth year of the Trojan War. As the legend goes, the city of Troy was protected by Zeus, the king of Greek gods. The king Laomedan, built a huge wall around the city for its protection with the help of the sea god Poseidon on condition that he would be compensated for his efforts. However after the wall was completed,the Trojans refused to compensate Poseidon and he withdrew his protection and the city became vulnerable to attack. The Trojan king and Queen Hecuba gave birth to noble Hector, prophetess Cassandra and handsome Paris. When Hecuba conceived Paris, there was an oracle that his son would be the cause of the destruction of Troy. Therefore, she abandoned the infant on Mount Ida where he was reared by shepherds. Just before the beginning of Trojan War, Zeus arranged a marriage between Thetis (goddess) and Peleus (mortal) who gave birth to Achilles. In the wedding all the gods and goddesses were enjoying themselves when Eris, the goddess of discord, being uninvited, threw a golden apple with the words "FOR THE FAIREST"inscribed on it. Hera, Athena and Aphrodite wanted to claim the apple and asked Zeus to be the judge. Zeus appointed the shepherd Paris to decide the contest. The goddesses approached Paris and tried to bribe him. Hera offered him kingdom

and power, Athena offered him wisdom and military success and Aphrodite offered him love and the beautiful Helen. Paris chose Aphrodite and Hera and Athena were enraged and vowed to destroy Paris and the city of Troy. Paris, then went to Troy and there he established himself as the king and went to Sparta, the court of Menelaus, where he seduced and abducted his wife Helen in his absence. When Menelaus returned to Sparta, he waged a war against the Trojans with other Greek leaders Agamemnon (his brother), Achilles, Odysseus, Ajax, Diomedes and Patroclus. The Spartans or the Greeks are referred to as 'Achaians' in the epic. Homer begins his epic poem from the tenth year of war and makes many references to the past events in the poem, which shows that the Greek audience was aware of this popular legend. The Trojan army contained warriors like Paris, Hector and Aeneas (son of Aphrodite and Anchises, a Trojan nobleman).

The *Mahabharata*is compiled by Vyasa or Krishna Dyaipayan, the son of the great saint Parasara , who conceived the idea of the epic and thought of gifting the sacred story to the world. He asked Brahma the Creator for a scribe who can take his dictation. Brahma suggested Lord Ganesha'sname. When approached, Ganesha agreed to write on condition that there should not be any interruption or pause in the narration. Vyasa consented and said that the Lord had to comprehend the meaning of his verses before writing it down. The main story of the *Mahabharata* goes that after the death of King Santanu, Chitrangada became king of Hastinapur and he was succeeded by Vichitravirya. The latter had two sons Dhitarashtra and Pandu. The elder being born blind, Pandu,the younger son ascended the throne. He committed an offence and had to retire to a forest with his two wives, Kunti and Madri, where he spent many years in penance. During their stay Kunti gave birth to three sons with divine helpYudhisthir (Dharma,Lord of religion), Arjuna(Lord Indra) and Bhim (Vayu,Lord of wind). Madri gave birth to twin sons, Nakul and Sahadev by invoking the AswiniKumaras, the twin sons of Lord Surya. Pandu and Madri passed away and the five Pandavaswere brought up by the sages in the forest. When the eldest, Yudhisthir was sixteen years old, the rishis brought them back to Hastinapur and entrusted them to their grandfather Bhisma. Within a short time they gained mastery over the Vedas, Vedanta, various artillery and archery related to warfare as Kshatriyas. The hundred sons of Dhitarashtra and Gandhari known as Kauravas became jealous of their cousin brothers and wanted to hurt them in various ways. Bhisma, as the head of the family, made a mutual understanding. The Pandavas were given separate regions with Indraprastha as their capital and Kauravas

ruled in Hastinapur. Some years later, there was a game of dice, where the Pandavas were defeated by Shakuni and the Kauravas. Draupadi, the wife of the Pandavas was humiliated and insulted and they retired to a forest for twelve years. They had to remain the thirteenth year incognito. When they returned and demanded their parental kingdom from Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kauravas, he refused. So, the great battle of Mahabharata followed as a consequence where the Pandavas were helped by Lord Krishna. Finally, the Pandavas defeated the Kauravas. They regained their kingdom and ruled for thirty- six years.

The epics were written to humanize myths and legends and Gods play a great role in divine mythology. The *Iliad* is about the relationships between the deities and how they organized into a hierarchy with Zeus as their head. Initially, the intervention of gods was due to man's helplessness before nature and destiny but later the rhapsodes exploited the stories in order to produce greater dramatic effects. "Homeric epics are not the works of one poet but the creation to a great extent of many rhapsodes belonging to different period"(C.A.Trypanis).[1] Trypanis states that, the epics were written from seventh century onwards when the Greek alphabets had spread and a whole wave of literary and historical work appears. The *Iliad* is believed to be not the work of Homer alone but many interpolations were made by rhapsodes of subsequent ages, which is evident from the interweaving of different versions of myths, episodes that resulted in many contradictions. The poet/ rhapsodes were very particular about the simple dramatic manner in which the content is presented. Every significant character presented in the poem like Agamemnon, Hector, Achilles and Paris are introduced at some critical 'dramatic moment' in the epic. In order to achieve the dramatic effect the people in the heroic world are presented as idealized beings. The appearance of gods and their interaction with the epic heroes add to the splendor in the world of mortals. Some of the heroes are descendents of the gods like Achilles (son of Thetis and Peleus), Helen (daughter of Zeus and Leda,a mortal) who are often helped and protectedby the gods to fulfill their own ends and also to aid the humans out of difficult situations. For example in *Iliad,* Book II, we see that Zeus is fulfilling his promise to Thetis , that he would help the Trojans. So he sends a fraudulent dream of hope to Agamemnon that he can defeat the Trojans once and for all in battle the next morning. Hector orders the Trojans to meet the Achaians. In Book III, Paris and Menelaus engage in a single combat. Dueling with Javelin and sword, Menelaus proves a superior warrior and he inflicts a slight wound on Paris. The Trojan prince is taken

captive but while Menelaus is dragging him to the Achaian lines. Aphrodite intervenes and rescues her favourite warrior. She conceals him in a mist and carries him to his bedroom where she brings Helen to join him. Similarly in Book IV, we see how the gods mastermind the course of the battle. Here we see the gods meet in a conference on Olympus. Zeus proposes that since Menelaus has obviously won the duel, the long nine years war should be closed. Hera and Athena dislike this and Hera in particular vehemently protests to Zeus. She wants the complete destruction of Troy, a town she bitterly hates and she rejects the idea of a truce. Zeus gives in and sends Athena to arrange the resumption of the fighting. In Book XIV, we see Zeus has brought Hector and the Trojans as far as the Achaian ships. So he relaxes and turns his attention to other matters. Poseidon takes advantage of Zeus's lapse of attention and helps the Achaians in disguise as Calchas. From Olympus, Hera notices this. She makes a plan to distract Zeus so that Poseidon will have more opportunity to help the besieged Achaians. Dressing in her finest garments and borrowing the magic girdle of Aphrodite, Hera flies to Mt. Ida where Zeus is sitting. She overwhelms him with her charms and easily seduces him. As prearranged, the god of sleep casts a spell over Zeus.

The Homeric epic tried to combine the ideal and the real and did it quite naturally without making much exaggeration to make the narrative improbable. We see the battle of Achilles,the undaunted, brave hero with the Trojans, which is never exalted to a hyperbolic level. Again when Agamemnon battles single handedly against great odds, there is not many supernatural elements present in it. When, the heroes are trapped with divine curse or wrath then some other divine beings come to their aid. Since the epic described the tragedy of an epic hero whose suffering, whose wrath was symbolic of the tragedy of all human beings. It was the necessity of the poet not to bring down human sensitivity to sentimentalism. The gods provide the wisdom, the forbearance, the courage and the perseverance to the humans to bear the misfortunes stoically.

Mahabharata is the story of the Great Warbetween the Bharata Kings that continued for eighteen days before the 6th century B.C.[2]. It was a mnemonic poem composed before the art of writing was known to the Indians.The war became the centre of a cycle of legends, songs and poems in ancient India. As Romesh Chandra Dutt observes, " the vast mass of legends and poetry accumulated during centuries was cast in a narrative form and formed the Epic of the great Bharata nation and therefore called the Maha-Bharata". Every generation of poets had something to add and it gradually

became a voluminous mass of tales, traditions, legends and myths of ancient India woven in the fabric of an Epic [3]. Dutt also points out that since Krishna worship became the dominant religion of India after the decline of Buddhism in India, the *Mahabharata* reflects the predominance of Lord ShriKrishna ,who is referred to in different names in the entire epic like Madhusudan andVasudeva. In this epic, it is the great epic characters like Yudhisthir ,Karna, Arjun, Draupadi, Gandhari, Bhisma and Duryodhan whose calm dignity of strength, valor and overwhelming passions are the centre of focus. Not only the characters, but also the incidents of the epics, are made impressive and striking to bring out the grandeur of the royal dynasty. The splendor of the episodes are seen in the tournament of the princes in which Arjuna and Karna meet (who can be called the Achilles and Hector of the Indian epic), the gorgeous coronation of Yudhisthir, the fatal game of dice and the wrath of Draupadi after her royal insult. Here also we see that, when the epic characters are confused, misguided, tormented or overpowered by evil, the gods came to their rescue and advised them to be tolerant and perseverant. Some examples: when Draupadi was disrobed in the court after the Pandavas lost in the dice game, she prayed to Lord Krishna :

O Lord of the World", she wailed, " God whom I adore and trust, abandon me not in this dire plight. You are my soul refuge. Protect me". [4]

Then a miracle occurred as unending quantity of cloth were supplied and Dushsasana could not succeed in stripping of the sari from her body and finally retired exhausted. Draupadi was enraged by this humiliation of a royal queen and stood grief-stricken trembling in embarrassment. Krishna consoled her saying :

" Those who tormented you will be stricken to death in the bloody quagmire of a lost battle. Wipe your eyes. I solemnly promise that your grievous wrongs shall be amply avenged. I shall help the Pandavas in every way. You will become an empress. The Heavens may fall, the Himalayas may split in twain, the earth may crumble or the boundless sea may dry up, but I tell you verily, my wordsshall stand. I swear this"[5]. He took a solemn oath before Draupadi .In another instance, when the Pandavas were wandering in the forest for twelve years, Arjuna reached the mountain of Indrakila where he met an old Brahman who was the God Indra in disguise and wanted to meet his son Arjuna. Arjunabowes before him and said, " I seek arms. Bless me with weapons".

Indra replied, "O Dhananjaya what is the use of weapons? Ask for pleasures."

Arjuna answered, "O King of gods, I do not seek pleasures. I seek but weapons."

Indra said, " If you be blessed by the vision of god Siva, the three-eyed god and obtain his grace, you will receive divine weapons. Do penance unto Siva."[6]

In the *Iliad*, the tussle is between two tribes : the Acheans consisting of Agamemnon, Menelaus whose wife Helen had been abducted, Achilles and the Trojans comprising of Paris who abducted Helen and Hector. The ancient Greeks resided as tribal groups in different regions. The gods were actually appointed as leader of their tribes and were the protector of their tribes. With the growth in tribal groups the need arose to assign 'departmental gods' with special attributes and they had their special geographical homes and are referred as 'ArgivaHera' , 'Cyprian Aphrodite' and 'Athenian Pallas'. Thus, when Achilles prays for help to Zeus, he declines as he was the god of Troy and could not help a Dodenean Achilles. In the *Mahabharata* the number of gods involved in the narrative are much lesser than the *Iliad* and their relations with humans are more indirect. Here we find the involvement of Sun god, Indra and Shri Krishnamostly. Karna is the son of Sun god and he provides him with earrings and armor to make him powerful and protect him from evil. Arjuna was the son of Indra, the King of gods. In the contest between Arjuna and Karna, Indra took the side of Arjuna and went in disguise of a Brahmin and asked forKarna's special protective shield (the earrings and armor) to reduce his power.The Sun god did not directly come to the rescue of his son Karna but only warned him of such a deceitful consequence in his dream. Lord Shri Krishna is the superhuman identity but again he is the king of Dwarka who masterminds the war which is referred to as the 'dharmayuddha' (a battle for righteousness) between the Kauravas representing the dishonest, corrupt and immoral and the Pandavas, the chaste and the moral. Krishna referred as 'Vasudeva' is the ruler of 'Yadav' tribe though he is born as a 'kshatriya' representing a higher caste. He is the protector of his tribe as human but at the same time the protector of the universe as a divine being. Lord Shri Krishna appears in his superhuman stature before Arjunas 'Viswaroop' in the *Mahabharata* where he is seen to protect the good and annihilate the evil. Thus, he operates on both thehuman and divine level.

But, in the *Iliad* we notice two separate worlds, the world of man and the world of gods. In the world of man misfortune, war and death dominates but in the world of god there is happiness, joy and immortality. The poet/ rhapsodes main aim was to keep a firm hold over the hearer's attention while recitation. They used a simple narrative style with lot of dramatic element to achieve this. The legends and myths were already known to the listeners but they still liked to hear the exploits of the epic heroes.As the epic proceeded,the audience knew who would be killed in the battle and who would survive but they waited for the hero's confrontation with his destiny, the detailed description of the injuries and the deaths of the heroes. The epics reflecthuman frailty, power of destiny and the sadness of death. It is through divine intervention that the epic gains a heroic and human character. In Book I, Agamemnon incurs the wrath of Achilles by taking the war prize of Achilles, Briseis (a young maiden) and he wants to leave the war that was continuing for nine years. The *Iliad* opens at this juncture of the narrative. Achilles is helped by Thetis, his mother. He requests her to ask for Zeus' help in defeating the Achaians. Thetis visits Zeus on Olympus and Zeus agrees to aid the Trojans but is scared of his wife Hera who hates the Trojans. In Book XIX , we see the saffron robed Dawn arising from the streams of Oceanus to bring light to immortals and to mortal men and Thetis came to the ships bearing the gifts from the god (armor for Achilles). She found Achilles clasping the hands of Patroclus and wailing. She consoles him saying, "My child this man must we let be, for all our sorrow, to lie as he is, seeing he hath been slain once for all by the will of the gods. But receive thou from Hephaestus glorious armor exceeding fair, such as never yet a man bare upon his shoulders …"

"But do thou call to the place of gathering the Achaean warriors and renounce thy wrath against Agamemnon, shepherd of the host,and then array thee with allspeed for battle and clothe thee in thy might. So saying, she filled him with dauntless courage."[7]

In Book XIX, a little later Agamemnon speaks to Achilles about his helplessness:

" Full often have the Achaeans spoken unto me this word and were ever fain to chide me :howbeit it is not. I that am at fault, but Zeus and Fate and Erinys that walketh in darkness. Seeing that in the midst of the place of gathering they cast upon my soul fierce blindness on that day, when of mine own arroganceI took from Achilles his prize. But what could I do ? It is God that bringeth all things to their issue .Eldest daughter of Zeus is Ate that blindeth all. "[8]

The role of gods and goddesses in the epics in a way was to justify the life of epic heroes, their actions ,their achievements and performances to common men. The justification of war, the enormous losses and massive killing of soldiers are not meaningless. Tradition has it that Narada told the the story of the *Mahabharata* to the 'devas' (gods), while Suka, the son of Vyasa taught it to the 'gandharvas' , the 'rakshasas' and the 'yakshas'. It is well known that Vaisampayana,one of the chief disciples of Vyasa, revealed the epic for the benefit of humanity. After him Suta recited the poem to an assembly of sages under the leader, rishi Saunaka. He addressed the assembly:

"I had the good fortune to hear the story of the *Mahabharata* composed by Vyasa to teach humanity dharma and the other ends of life."[9]

In the last 'parva' of *Mahabharat*,Yudhisthira was very anguished after he performed the water ceremonies for the peace of the souls of the dead. Narada (the messenger of god) appeared before him and Yudhisthira expressed his agony for the death of Karna. Narada explained the curses inflicted on Karna were due to the Brahman and Parasuram's wrath as the cause of his misfortune.

In the Greek epics also, we see the extolling of the Greek heroes, their achievements in war, their single combat but at the same time their suffering. Gods appear at these crucial junctures when these undaunted fighters are defeated or endangered and justify the death of these heroes.

The Homeric epics played a significant role in establishing the Greek identity.[10] The poems presented a set of religious, ethical, military and political values that all Greeks were expected to subscribe to. The epics represented the ideological tensions of a society in transition from autocracy to democracy from eighth century to fifth century BCE. The text showcases a problematic status of a lone warrior in whom all power is invested as we see in Achilles. The military combat between two individuals Achilles and Hector or Menelaus and Paris occupies a major space. The poem is about power and crisis of power and a tussle between the powerful individuals about who is a greater hero continues. It explores the problem of kingship as a model of political order. Since the poems are read out in the Dionysus Festival at Acropolis in Athens,before a huge gathering of people at the temple of Athena, the poets tried to bring forth the Greek identity which was predominantly Athenian. The emphasis was on developing the true Greek classical identity of a aristocratic hero, the noble characteristics that he would bear to become a classical iconic figure. Thus, in the epics, the individual, military combat

between aristocrats is highlighted but at the same time it is universalized to give a social, cultural and moral validity. Therefore, it is not a sole Achilles, Agamemnon ,Yudhisthira or Arjuna fighting for their own cause. Gradually, lot of kings get involved which indicates how power is invoked and displayed through the heroic poems. The gods and goddesses were actually representative of the inner selves of human beings. "It is as though the gods occupy a parallel universe, but not a morally higher or better space and their judgements are as partisan and partial as human judgements can be", comments Michael Schmidt in '*The Iliad and the Odyssey*'.[11] They are like any other imaginary fictional characters in a narrative poem. The gods are made more powerful, immortal and beautiful. The mortal men's aspirations, desires and dreams are symbolically represented through them and are assigned different fields to manipulate matters related to that field.

In the *Mahabharata*, in the last 'parva', 'Yudhisthira's Final Trial'(106), it is evident what role the gods play. Yudhisthira was the only privileged Pandava who went to Heaven physically and he got terribly angry seeing Duryodhana sitting in ' Swarga'(heaven) and his brothers, wife, sons suffering in hell and he cursed the gods and denounced 'dharma'. Then Naradadisclosed that, "In swarga we harbor no ill will. It is not right to let the things of the flesh stay in the mind and breed ill will. Do not speak in this manner about Duryodhana. There is no place in swarga for hatred. You have arrived here with your human body, so it is that you have these inappropriate feelings'. Discard them son!"[12] When Yudhisthira was reluctant to go to swarga and stay in hell with his brothers and wife, Yama, the god of dharma revealed his true self and said that his brothers were not in hell. It was an illusion designed to test him. He was then, transfigured to a god. With the disappearance of the human body also disappeared all traces of anger and hatred.

Therefore, it can be said that the epic poets were actually attempting to project the gods as the different elemental forces in human beings. They were the epitome of anger, love, hatred, lust, fear, power and helped in bringing out the human conflicts and crisis. The only difference is they were immortal unlike the humans but could not change the destiny of characters or 'moira' as the Greeks would say.[13] They enjoyed a greater degree of freedom but they could not prevent or reverse the 'moira'. So, they were granted greater power to handle human crisis, anguish, agony, conflict and if possible provide a solution and respite to the tormented souls. The gods and goddesses were incorporated to induce a cathartic effect on the listeners who would be troubled by the death, suffering, torments and agony of the great heroic characters.

Thus, it can be concluded that, the Greek and Indian epics included gods and goddesses to give the epic a grand structure, a noble mission and amoral preaching. As Gilbert Murray observes, "the growth of Greek poetry must be seen as a force and embodiment of a force for the progress of the human race. By progress I understand some gradual ennobling and enriching of the content of life. The idea of service to the community was more deeply rooted in the Greeks than in us. As soon as the Greeks began to reflect about literature, the main question they asked about each writer was almost always upon these lines :'Does he help to make better man?' , ' Does he make life a better thing? '."

With this we may juxtapose Romesh Chandra Dutt on *the Mahabharata*:

" … it is an encyclopedia of life and knowledge of Ancient India. And it discloses to us an ancient and forgotten world, a proud and noble civilization which has passed away … and what it has done for the cause of human knowledge and human civilization is a matter of history".[15]

Therefore, the epic writers used Gods and goddesses as superhuman characters to fulfill their mission as Great Protector, Noble Counselor and Moral Preacher in their grand narratives.

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CONSTRICTED FEMININE SPACE IN NAIPAUL'S FICTION: THE MATRIARCHS ARE YET MARGINALIZED

Manisha Sarkar

V.S. Naipaul has often been indicted as a misogynist for his abrasive representationof women in his fiction. Unmistakably, Naipaul cannot be acclaimed as a feminist writer.Critics like Helen Pyne-Timothy vehemently denounced Naipaul'sview of women as "extremely harsh, moralistic and judgemental"(306). Interestingly,Naipaul's critics have analysed his women characters as either householders or man-eaters, asHemenwayremarks:

> [u]nattractive women inhabit [Naipaul's]fiction...and one searches hard...to find a woman who has not been denied the reader's sympathy. His women characters are either severely limited by tradition, or semiwhores bent on using men for personal ends (192).

However, such polarized appraisal is certainly a naive reading of the complex postcolonialpredicament encountered by Naipaul's fictional women. Women figures inNaipaul's novels are extremely enigmatic- they are doubly marginalized in a postcolonial world striving deviously to survive the inescapable difficulty of being. In my paper I intend to explore how in some of Naipaul's novels like *A House for Mr Biswas, The Mimic Men*and *Half a Life*, women use myriad strategies/ploys to attain social identity, mobility and respectability.

In *A House for Mr Biswas*,the women characters strive to create their own private spaces, through whose assistance men discharge their purposeful roles. The whole array of female characters comprising of Biswas's mother-in-lawMrs.Tulsi, his wife Shama and his daughter Savi functions as directional forcesproviding necessary impetus to Biswas's quest for identity. Biswas's roles as a husband, son-in-law and father could be achieved only with the help of the responsible roles played by the women either by rescuing him

from misadventures like Shama, sheltering him after consistent failures like Mrs. Tulsior finally sustaining him in old age like Savi. In other words, women perform the domineering role of 'matriarchs' at different strategic points in the narratives and yet Naipaul sensitively delineates how their indispensability is confinedmerely to the domestic realm.

An evolution of the feminine space in Naipaul's novelscan be comprehensivelyassessed in the paradigms of Elaine Showalter's three phases-'Feminist', 'Feminine' and 'Female'. Although Mrs.Tulsi represents the 'feminist phase' in her virulent denunciation of male chauvinism,we cannot but acknowledge that she had prematurely become a widow encumbered with the responsibility of arranging respectable marriages for her daughters without any dowry. In the intensely multicultural Caribbean society, this is surely a task that required enough diplomacy. Accordingly, Mrs. Tulsi tried desperately to retain the joint family structure transforming Hanuman House into a microcosm of the authoritarian state, where power was all important. Gordon Rohlehraptly points out: "Hanuman House reveals itself, not as a coherent construction of the clan, but as a slave society, erected by Mrs.Tulsi and Seth who need workers to rebuild their empire" (87).

Provoked by the urge to maintain the racial purity of the Tulsi lineage against the threat of miscegenation, Mrs.Tulsi enforced unwavering loyalty from his sons-in-laws. She pretends that it is Biswas's impecunious state that inspired him to join the family voluntarily, ignoring the subtle pressures that she had diplomatically exerted to manipulate his marriage with Shama. Biswas soon realized that for Mrs. Tulsi matchmaking has always been a deal:

> [u]p to this time MrBiswas thought he had been especially favoured by the Tulsis. But when he came to see how the family disposed of its daughters, he wondered that Seth and Mrs. Tulsi had gone to such trouble…to make marriage attractive to him. They had married Shama to him simply because he was of the proper caste…(97).

Mrs. Tulsi has therefore graspedthe idea that a slave system must be able to legitimize its own existence.Satendra Nandan thus elucidates it: "Mrs. Tulsi, the cunning coloniser, justified her exploitation with her foxy explanation that she is really doing her subjects good…"(61).The distressful tragedy of Biswas's life isthat it is he who performs the ritualistic role of the newly married Hindu girl surrendering reluctantlyto the wilful discretion of his mother-in-law. Her subtle 'sexual politics' is to strategically employ the

weapon of illness through which she exercises her autocratic dominance, uniting the household against the rebellious son-in-law and inviting him to share even her maudlin nostalgia. Gordon Rohlehr thus explicateshow Naipaul here subverts the gender stereotypes of a woman being represented either as the 'angel in the house' or as the 'madwoman', to recreate a diplomatic" powerful mother figure [who] rules through an understanding of the psychology of slavery" (88).

However, Naipaul's projection of this imposing 'matriarch' is fraught with its ambivalences and contradictions. While it is Mrs.Tulsi, who constantly humiliates Biswas compelling him to abide by the Hindu religious customs, her resourcefulness and prompt initiatives to salvage Biswas from his psychological depression after his failures at the Chase and Green Vale estate works are equally commendable. Moreover, her zealous protection of her daughters becomes perfectly understandable if we examineGillian Dooley's observation that domestic violence against women was a feature of everyday life in the Caribbean.Wife-beating "becomes a source of pride for both husband and wife...almost a matter of ritual"(89). Seen from this historical perspective, Mrs.Tulsi emerges as a protector, deconstructing the patriarchal hegemony where women are often treated as the exclusive property of the in-laws. Her demand for the rank abnegation of individual identity from his sons-in-laws is thus an affirmation of the matriarchal system. However, Naipaul also foregrounds here her failure to segregate Hanuman House from the creolization of the New World. She eventually agrees to her sons,Owad's and Sekhar'smarriage with Christian girls. Rajkumar Halder thus points out her vulnerability as a mother: "…as she exploits her daughters...she herself is exploited by her sons...who being well established unscrupulously leave Tulsi House forgetting all about the contribution and pain of the mother"(59). Mrs.Tulsi's contestation for authority thereby remains provisional.

Biswas's wife Shama is modelled on Naipaul's mother, of whom he has stated: "I don't think she has ever experienced emotions that are particular to her: all of her pleasure and pains are experienced as ritual moments"(Michener 66). Naipaul's observation amply foregrounds the callous indifference meted out to the daughters of Hanuman House,whose economic dependence marginalizes them as the doubly-oppressed 'other'. What is more poignant is as Halder elucidates, "[t]hey themselves are unaware of their abject humiliating condition since they have internalized the oppressive Tulsi code so well that nothing seems unnatural to their

sensitivity"(56). The gender inequality and the subaltern status of the women in the householdbecomes blatant in the narrator's comment that "[t]he daughters and their children swept and washed and cooked and served in the store...In return they were given food, shelter and a little money" (98).

This attitude of gender discrimination which regards women as disembodied presence is further reflected in Seth's chauvinistic introduction of Shama to Mr. Biswas: "[s]he is a good child. A little bit of reading and writing even...Nothing to worry about. In two or three years she might even forget" (91). What startles us most is Shama's servile acceptance of this neglect of education with calm resignation. Although Shama confesses to Biswas that she" used to come first in arithmetic" (357), she never seems to regret that the orthodox Hindu ideology prevented herfrom continuing schooling unlike her two brothers who were being prepared to study in premier institutions like Cambridge. Such singular insistence on women being kept illiterate clearly advocates that gender is a social construct which denied Shama and the other Tulsi daughters any individual aspiration. Virginia Woolf in her work *A Room of One's Own*, similarly analyses through the fictional character of Shakespeare's 'imagined sister' Judith, howa woman is trapped by the confines of social expectations:

> ...what would have happened had Shakespeare had a wonderfully gifted sister, called Judith,...She was as adventurous, as imaginative,...to see the world as he was. ...Soon, however...she was to be betrothed ... She cried out that marriage was hateful…and for that she was severely beaten by her father (46).

Interestingly, Woolf's analysis identified the coercive force of 'beating' as the only effective weapon to curb the assertive spirit of the woman. It closely echoes the ritual 'flogging' that theTulsi daughters received at the hands of their domineering mother: "[a]t Hanuman House the sisters still talked with pride of the floggings they had received from Mrs.Tulsi...And there was some rivalry...as to who had been flogged worst of all"(206). Naipaul's sarcastic reference however fails to camouflage the sheer benumbing effect that such childhood of self-denial had on the minds of Shama and the other daughters. A legacy of corporal punishment further compelled them as 'matriarchs' to unleash similar cruelty on their children. Shama's harsh treatment of her daughter Savi exemplifies it. While at Chase, Shama "seldom beat Savi" (206) being at liberty to act independently, at Hanuman Houseshe becomes a victim of 'double-consciousness' and transforms herself into a "thorough Tulsi" (99) to ensure a substantial foothold.

One surely cannot miss the 'cultural hegemony' which compels even the 'matriarch' figures to succumb to the collective will of the other women. When Biswas purchases a doll's house for Savi defying the Tulsi code of uniformity, Shamais impelled to destroy it only to gratify the malice of the fellow Tulsi daughters.Shama's pathetic lamentation reveals her objectification which even infringes upon a woman's right to cherish any individual possession: "[y]ou don't know what I had to put up with. Talking night and day....So I had to satisfy them. I break up the dolly-house and everybody was satisfied"(235). Such annihilation of self-respect locates Shama as the docile 'female' fulfilling her stereotypical roles. Naipaul thus articulates: "[f]or Shama and her sisters...ambition, if the word could be used, was a series of negatives: not to be childless, not to be an undutiful daughter, sister, wife, mother, widow" (165).

Nonetheless, Naipaul's women are not exclusively projected as impassive beings. Even Shama emerges as the resilient, self-confident housewife once Biswaspurchases a new house. Confronted with financial crisis, Shama "devised plans on her own"(7) convincing Biswas "to accept her judgement and to respect her optimism"(8). Naipaul's unwavering faith in the potential of women to transcend their limited social roles comes alive in the character of Savi who shoulders the family responsibilities by getting hold of a job "at a bigger salary than Mr Biswas could ever have got" (589). By conferring the status of the son on Savi, Naipaul signals a paradigmatic shift in his attitude towards female strength counter balancing the sheer neglect and oppression that theTulsi daughters have always endured.

In *The Mimic Men*, Sandra epitomizes the Western ambitious and assertive English woman. She marries Ralph Singh so as to avoid a dismal future after her futile academic aspiration and accompanies him to his native Caribbean island of Isabella. It is in a state of identity crisis that Ralph meets Sandra and is instantaneously enticed by her unwavering confidence.Ralph thus enumerates Sandra's admirable qualities:

> …such confidence in her as someone who could come to no harm - a superstitious reliance on her, which was part of the strength I drew from her - that in that moment it seemed to me that to attach myself to her was to acquire that protection which she offered...(48).

Apart from the magnitude of her social ambition, part of Sandra's fascination lies in her felicity of expression in English, an attribute Ralph

can never fully imbibe. Ralph thus candidly acknowledges: "[w]ith Sandra...the mere act of communication was a delight" (45). While for Ralph, the marriage was another buffoonish strategy to fortify "the original compact between the colonizer [the mother] and the colonial subject [the baby]" (Cudjoe 104), for Sandra it is her utter dislike for everything mundane which impulsively provokes her to savour the exotic romance of a mixed marriage.

Ralph like Biswas, believed that this new bond of marriage would empower him to reconcile the disparate aspects of his hybrid self. Soon however the pitfalls of such a marriage unravels itself when Sandra feels alienated being conscious of her metropolitan instinct and racial superiority. When Ralph married Sandra discovering in her a supposed oasis of emotional anchorage, he failed to realize that Sandra's affirmation was merely a veneer of an unanchored, troubled spirit. His amorous passions gradually begin to dissipate reviving his once suppressed irrational fears: "[s]he had begun to get some of my geographical sense, that feeling ofhaving been flung off the world...That she shared a fear I knew so well strengthened me…The very things I had once admired in her…were what I now pitied her for" (71). From his scornful reference to his wife, we can easily fathom Ralph's shocking disillusionment and a realization of the fallacy of "the ill-advised mixed marriage" (41), as Singh denotes it.

According to Martha Lewis, Sandra can be categorized as a voluptuous 'man-eater' insidiously exploiting Singh to evade her own feelings of exile and alienation. She is undoubtedly beyond the docile 'householder' category of women like Shama who sacrifices her individual desires to bring solidarity to the marital relationship. Instead, she prioritizes her own wilful individuality. However, such gendered reading fails to comprehend the intensity of 'cultural alienation' which Sandra perceptively realized in the postcolonial Caribbean society. Subjugation of women pervasive in the Indo-Caribbean families definitely counters the liberal background of Western culture to which Sandra belongs. AmeenaGafoor's statement amply illustrates that Sandra's displacement in Isabella is generated from a fundamental cultural hiatus: "…women play crucial roles within the family that is matriarchal in nature, but patriarchal in appearance, which means that women have limited power and opportunity for independence" (128).

Unquestionably, Sandra is individualistic and revolted against such imposing patriarchal hegemony. Nevertheless, the failure of the marriage is equally precipitated by Ralph's inability to take decisive action. Even when Sandra emotionally drifts away from Ralph, he withdraws into passivity:

"[i]t was not for me to decide to leave; that decision was hers alone...Sandra bears no blame; it was he, himself who had willed the gift away" (76).Renuka Roy thus argues that Naipaul's fiction "historically portrays post-colonial society which characterizes complexity of several types to such an extent" that makes it "impossible to have a healthy existence between man and woman" (6). By making Sandra overtly liberal, Naipaul thereby' destereotypes' women whooccasionally emerge as triumphant independent entities beyond men and marriage.

Naipaul's novel *Half a Life* is unique in its cast of female characters. Willie's mother happens to be a low-born Dalit girl whom his father impulsively decides to marry inspired by the Gandhian ideology of a casteless society. Willie howeverfeels ashamed of his mother's social status which motivated him to fantasize greater identities. Naipaul's sympathetic projection of the self-sacrificing mother who dearly loves her son entirely different from her, certainly negates Hemenway's remark that Naipaul's abhorrence for women makes it difficult for us to "find a woman who has not been denied the reader's sympathy" (192). Willie's intense hatred for his scheduled caste mother comes forth in his composition entitled "King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid" which narrates the social embarrassment experienced by the beggar maid for the king's magnanimous gesture of marrying this woman of astounding beauty. What is shocking is that the queen's son (with whom Willie empathizes) unable to bear this social disgrace, voluntarily commits matricide much to the gratification of the courtiers. Indignantly, just as Willie's father failed to accept his wife as his equal, Willie too deserts her.This illustrates Naipaul's compassionate gaze at the plights of the marginalized women, doubly alienated by a caste-ridden, orthodox, patriarchal society. Naipaul clearly evinces the constrictions of the feminine space even within the narrative structure, as the story of Willie's mother's social humiliation both in public and private spheres are presented either through Willie or his father's accounts. The strategic absence of the female voice is only too ostensible here.

Naipaul's delineation of sexual relationships constitutes a major component in examining the contribution of his women figures in the transformation of his male protagonists. For Willie, a mixed-race Portuguese-African woman named Ana appears as his only saviourat a critical juncture when his sexual escapades with multiple women in London only tormented him with feelings of sexual incompetence and castration. For the first time, Willie gets acknowledgement for his abandoned book primarily because Ana

hoped to identify her personal crisis with what is recorded in Willie's book. Naipaul's ironicintonation subtly manifested in Willie's emotional desperation that Willie "…didn't want the woman to be let down. He wanted her to stay an admirer" (124-25), indeed foregrounds that the very basis of Willie's attachment to Ana is his want of wholeness. Quite remarkably, much like Ralph, Willie discovers in Ana an emotional reciprocity emanating from their common colonial background, as Willie declares: "Ana was important to me because I depended on her for my idea of being a man" (142).

Naipaul's women are thus conveniently placed in a dependent relationship with the men in their lives, for each of whom they are expected to play the overwhelming, protective role of the 'matriarch' only to be betrayed and desertedlater. Despite all the generosity extended towards Willie, he recklessly abandoned Ana to an uncertain fate in her troubled East-African country resembling Mozambique. Ana's strength of character is juxtaposed here with Willie's moral weakness. Being exasperated with a low self-esteem as simply "'Ana's London man' " (145), Willie retaliates vociferously: "I am forty-one. I am tired of living your life"(227). Such rejection undoubtedly signifies an emotional castration experienced by the male protagonist culminating in anon-acceptance of the feminine space.

Thus, Naipaul's representation of women is starkly realistic. Their only means of survival in a diasporic situation is to repeatedly indulge in the politics of their 'body' and 'gender' to counter the untoward facets of their existence. Naipaul's perception weaves a consistent pattern where the women function as 'matriarchs', protecting, comforting and eveninstigating the males in their quest for identity. The construction of their individual femininity however remains contested in the process.

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The Moderate Bushman: A Reading of Will Ogilvie's Bush Ballads

Swati Roy Chowdhury

William Henry Ogilvie (Will Ogilvie as he is more famously known) was an eminent Scottish Australian narrative poet and short story writer, though his inclination towards poetry was clearer and more evident. Considered an integral part of the famous trio of Australian Bush poets (other two being the legendary A.B..Banjo Paterson and Henry Lawson) Ogilvie's most famous Bush anthology is *Fair Girls and Gray Horses* (1896) which is still considered to be of the same merit as the best in the genre like Paterson's *Man from the Snowy River and Other Poems* or Lawson's *While the Billy Boils*.

Ogilvie's anthology *Fair girls and gray horses, with other verses*, was first published in 1898. It contained verses condemning the misogynist practices of the bush balladeers including Henry Lawson. His poem 'To a Misogynist'(17) warns against the popular male practice of showing hatred towards women castigating the later as 'wanton and worse' declaring that such vows being detrimental to the health of the society, should be excised.

But in this poem as well women's role in the society is determined not as individuals but in relation to the role that they play in the lives of men. Therefore 'the women to worship as well as to curse'(17) about whom Ogilvie mentions in his poem represent two sections of women- the worshipped ones are those who satisfactorily carry out their performances as 'sisters', 'mothers' and 'lovers'; any other role in which women seek to challenge male authority make them cursed. It seems that Ogilvie's perspective, being deeply influenced by his English upbringing is getting reflected in the poem, but at the same time it must also be noted that he allows a place for the women in the bush society not for what the women are themselves but for what they serve to the men. Ogilvie's poetry is, thus, not a womanless version of verses but poetry that subtly subjugates women as appendages to men.

If Ogilvie's poem 'To a Misogynist' makes only a subtle reference to the 'cursed' women in 'His Gippsland Girl' (27-28) contained in the same book he reports the catastrophic effect of a woman on a bushman. Unlike in Lawson's poetry in Ogilvie the girls are not anonymous and in this poem it is the shearer who is not given any name yet when it comes to naming the poem the poet's choice is the relation which connects the man and his woman with an obvious hierarchical superiority conferred upon the man (a practice that is widely popular among the bush poets including Lawson). Nellie, the Gippsland girl mentioned in the poem gets married to someone else before her lover after finishing his fighter's job comes back to her. Thus she violates the code of 'commitment' in love and may be held responsible for the suicide suggested at the end of the poem which the shearer plans to commit. The entire sympathy of the poet is with the broken hearted man, and his prior description of his hero's love for the lass in spite of his engagement in tough jobs ensures that he receives the readers' pity as well.

In this comparative study of men and women in the bush the lady appears as an impediment to the observance of bush values. Perhaps her marriage to the groom is a marriage of convenience- carried out with the immediate objective of procuring social security and comfort- the two ideals that may be said to be condemned by the bush men as unheroic and therefore, unmanly. Since the bush woman's efficacy is proven by her ability to abide by the rules formulated by the obviously patriarchal society the lady in the poem proves herself incompetent as a bush maid and incapable of being the ideal partner of a bushman. The man, on the other hand, also fails to satisfactorily stand up to the ideals of bushmanship. The cause of his doom is his love for a woman, thereby making a suggestion that that female association where the lady does not conform to the normative formulations of patriarchy is a hindrance to social progress, and a man surrendering to such feminine charms is rejected as an 'effeminate'.

Ogilvie, unlike the canonical bush poets, does not depict his heroes as unemotional devotees of the bush. On the contrary his heroes are love stricken bushmen suffering from the pangs of broken heart amidst physical sufferings offered by the bush clime as well as separation from their beloveds. But at the same time they are all devoted bushmen, extremely hardworking and committed to their duties towards the bush. The anonymous hero in the poem is, thus, a sincere bushman who choose his duties over his pleasure, curbs his emotions for the demands of reality and fails only when he makes a pejorative selection of the 'home' over the 'bush'.

Ogilvie thus shows a moderate approach to the issue of masculinity by aiming to achieve a fine balance between the contradictory traits of emotion and pragmatism, between the head and the heart and thus adds a distinct humanistic shade to the characters of the bushmen. But Ogilvie, in spite of the sympathy that he generates for the bush lover shows a preferential attitude towards the masculinist ways of bush life in the condemnation of the bushman for failing from his masculinist commitments.

The final self-retribution suggested in the concluding stanza of the poem is the poet's device for poetic justice. The error committed by the bushman is under the influence of a woman and hence it is only befitting that he should be punished by another hostile feminine force- Nature herself. The parallel drawn between nature and women is not new in literature but the way in which these two are connected in Bush literature is distinguished from others in that unlike most other works of literature here neither Nature nor women are symbols of creativity and fertility, rather they both are awe-inspiring and hostile forces whom the bushmen must tame to survive and in this violent struggle against intimidating female forces lie the significance of bushmen's existence and the justification of their masculinity.

Traditionally it has been seen that for the Bushmen the next important way to establish the supremacy of masculinity employed by different bush balladeers of the period is the projection of Australia as a country with potential but at the same time presenting various faces of adversity to its dwellers. Thus Nature in the Bush ballads is like that nagging woman at home who tries to restrict a Bushman at home with her violent charms. A Bushman must not listen to her, for it shall bring his immediate doom.

Equating the hostile Nature with a woman makes the gender politics involved in this more complicated. In Ogilvie's poem 'His Gippsland Girl' there is a stark picture of the disdainful bush Nature. The big flood abut which the poet mentions at the end of the poem is an agent of the catastrophic Nature, the cause of a bushman's doom unless he is man enough to intimidate her. Since the shearer- warrior succumbs to the overwhelming force of a woman's calamitous love it is very likely that he must surrender to the disastrous forces of Nature as well.

In 'The Broken Shoe' in the same anthology Ogilvie gives a poetic description of the true nature of distress that the Bush atmosphere offers to a bushranger:

Oh, the world is wide and bitter to the outcast and
the friendless!
But you never know how bitter or how friendless it
can be.
Till you see the big scrubs stretching to the west-
ward, black and endless,
And the sun-glare and the sand-drift on the silent
saltbush sea.(29-30)

The Bush with all her mysterious ways of offering resistance to human habitation is a tormenting experience for a solitary bush dweller. All the apparent symbols of nourishment present in Nature acquire alternate codes of signification in the Bush. Thus the image of vegetation gets represented in the Bush as prickly and torturing 'scrubs' 'black and endless'. This illustration of ceaseless barrenness refers to the perpetual persecution that a bushman must endure. Even the sun misses its usual significance as a creative, life-giving force in the bush ballads as its dazzling and blinding effects initiate trouble for the bushmen; and the sea is not seen as a vast storehouse of gems (and thus representing hope for the future) but as a confined 'saltbush' one, thus implying that such source of water, in spite of its presence, cannot bring any hope for the inhabitants because the water is too salty to be used for human consumption until further processing to remove the salt content from it. All these images of the customarily benign agents when they are endowed with reversed significances signify that the landscape, contrary to its usual role as a topographic setting in most literary works, assumes a greater importance in the bush ballads.

The landscapes in the bush ballads, therefore, emerge not as mere background but as strong, animated entities, or perhaps as characters. The antagonism that is offered by the land to the bushmen makes the bush territory the real *femme fatale* in their lives and yet they cannot help themselves to feel enchanted by the mesmerizing effects of the Bush. The bush for the bushmen is therefore what Egdon Heath is for ClymYeobrightin *The Return of the Native* : their fatal destiny and yet the irony is that they cannot actually escape from the grasping influence of the gothic terrain.Though in Hardy's novel the heath offers a greater doom for the protagonist EustaciaVye, the parallel between Clym and the bushmen sounds more appropriate because unlike Eustacia such eerie and haunting habitation is the men's deliberate

choice. Clym selects Egdon and the profession of hay trussing over a comfortable life in the city and a white-collar profession of a teacher not only because the place is his childhood paradise but also because as a grown up his love for the place establishes his surrender to the mysterious and bewitching forces of femininity.

A similar penchant is noticed in the bushmen's selection of the bush as their habitation. Since most of them have convict pedigree their choice of the Bush as dwelling arises from the practical necessity that emerges post deportation of their ancestors to the gothic southern land. But at the same time it is also an act of submission to the enchanting influences of the bush. Surrendering to the destructive charms of the bush is a bushman's death and conquering the haunting spirit of the bush is every bushman's noble task that also institutes the authority of masculinity.

Indeed such gothic characteristics ascribed to the Australian wilderness that is fondly called the bush is partly a mythical construction to endow the bushmen with unprecedented ascendancy over every natural obstacle and ground the victory of masculinity by taming the putative enchantress that the bush is. The bush ballads being songs of praise for the bushmen's achievements most of them portrayed the bush as an annihilating force and at the same time celebrated the bushranger's victory over it. Ogilvie depicts the bushmen's mastery over the bush in his poem 'Kings of the Earth':

It is over the clinging meadows
And the hedges thick and tall,
Where the frost still lies in the shadows
And the boldest ride for a fall;
It is over the stretching upland
Where the breeze is fresh from the sea,
And veiled in spray the stag at bay
That battles on bended knee.

It is down by the white-flagged courses
In the shimmer of silken wings,
Where the thunder of galloping horses
The blood to the pulses brings:

When your mount goes free to his fences
And leans to your gentle hold,
And the plaudits loud of the cheering crowd
Are better than gifts of gold.

It is here, in the southward, under
The rays of a sun that fall
Where the stockwhip's gathering thunder
Is the music sweetest of all:
Where the "scrubbers" under the dust-clouds
Are challenged, and caught, and passed,
Though flanks may bleed ere we wheel the lead
At the wings of the yard at last.(18-19)

The bush rider is allured by fresh breeze of the sea, the picturesque meadow and the shimmering valley that may be seen as nature's agents to seduce the bushmen into her deadly grasp; and therefore, very soon the 'clinging meadow' shows its propensity to facilitate a 'great fall' and 'the "scrubbers" under the dust-clouds' meet and greet the bush challengers'. The triumph of masculinity takes place when notwithstanding the aggressiveness of the bush the inmates of the bush rein her belligerence aimed at the bushmen. One cannot just miss the trope of phallic superiority embedded in the Bushman's taming of a she-Nature. The barren Australian landscape is apparently the woman whom only a bushman can legitimately tame and impregnate, thereby justifying her femininity.

In the end, therefore, it will be only logical to comment that Ogilvie's moderate attitude towards women is only partial because in a broader way he is only endorsing the idea of a man's superiority. He is only partially moderate in his approach towards the women-question in the Australian Bush. Thus, it will not be erroneous to comment that Ogilvie is arguably another poet in the same Bushman tradition.

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Teaching Pinter's *Comedy of Menace* to Undergraduate classes

Tapu Biswas

One should begin with a brief introduction to Pinter's modern post-War contexts and settings and then come to his special brand of comedy ie the *Comedy of Menace*.

After the horrors of World War II there emerged initially in France a rebellion against the essential beliefs and values of traditional culture and traditional literature. This earlier tradition had included the basic assumptions that human beings are fairly rational creatures who live in an at least partially intelligible universe, that they are part of an ordered social structure, and that they may be capable of heroism and dignity even in defeat. After the 1940s, however, there was a widespread tendency, especially prominent in the existential philosophy of such thinkers as Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, to view a human being as an isolated existent who is cast into an alien universe, to conceive the universe as possessing no inherent truth, value or meaning and to represent human life as an existence which is anguished, fruitless and meaningless.

The term "Comedy of Menace" is applied to the manifestations or embodiment of such perceptions in dramatic literature in particular. The term "Comedy of Menace" was first used in 1957 by David Campton as the sub-title of his collection of one-act plays named *The Lunatic View*, and was a year later applied to the plays of Pinter by Irving Wardle in a magazine article and although he subsequently wanted to withdraw the label, its aptness made it stick.

'Comedy of Menace' puns on "Comedy of manners", like such comedies by Congrevean and Shaw, Pinter's drama too provokes laughter through balanced phraseology, antithesis, and the language and manners of social classes – though the classes in Pinter's play are usually lower than those in Congreve's and Shaw's drama. Although Pinter's plays frequently contain

comic passages that help to create on atmosphere of "menace", 'mystery' and evasion. Beyond those too, Pinter's plays also begin comically but turn to physical, psychological or potential violence. In *The Dumb Waiter*, an outside force menaces a waiting killer, and in *A Slight Ache*, a seemingly schizophrenic individual fears a man he invites inside. Most usually in Pinter, the menace is left unspecified or implicit – and therefore made more ominous.

'Menace' figures in Pinter's first play *The Room*. Rose in this play is white, although she has Negro blood in her. She is afraid when a Negro enters her room, but cannot deny him as he is perhaps her father. The discovery of the Negro lineage of his wife had made Rose's husband aloof, withdrawn and quiet, but finding the Negro in his room makes him turn violent, and the ultimate result is his slaughter of the Negro. The sorrow at the death of Rose's father apparently causes Rose to turn blind, even though her blindness may also be symbolic of her refused to confront the reality in front of her. The whole play is thus virtually a dissertation on the subject of dominance, control, exploitation and victimization. The focus is throughout on the condition of isolation of an individual confronted with the menace of non-acceptance and violence.

The full dimension of the "Comedy of Menace" can however be better illustrated in Pinter's play *The Birthday Party*. Psychological torture and physical violence are given central prominence in this play. In both *The Room* and *The Birthday Party* there is a trapped human being but in the latter play the image of the trapped victim is more intense, and the exhibitions of cruelty, savagery, brutality and menace more focused and concentrated. In this play, indeed, Pinter seems to have discovered a relation between menace and the absurdity of life.

Both Betty and Stanley in the *Birthday Party* are comfortable in their cozy rooms and are reluctant to go out. The implication is that the rooms are a refuge from the outside world, but ironically enough this impression of cozy refuge makes the audience aware of an unidentified fear (the source of which is unknown) of an impending danger from the outside world. The story in its bare outlines, tells of Stanley, a good-for-nothing layabout whose claims include having once been a concert pianist. He lives a vegetative life as the only lodger in a seaside guest house, and is taken for granted by the easygoing owner, Petey, and cuddled and protected by his middle-aged landlady, Meg. Two visitors, Goldberg and McCann, arrive unexpectedly and frighten Stanley out of his lethargy, but it is not until the evening when

a pseudo birthday party is arranged in his honour that these fears are actively realized. He is first subjected to a brutal interrogation and then forced to join in a game of blind man's buff which ends with his being flattened against a wall. The two figures of Goldberg and McCann "converge upon him" menacingly in the torchlight. When we next see Stanley in the final act, he appears to have been physically and mentally broken, and is able only to emit gurgling sounds from his throat. "Clean-shaven", and "dressed in a dark well-cut suit and white collar", he is led away by the two mysterious strangers, and even in his finest hour, Petey can offer only the most token resistance: "Stan, don't let them tell you what to do!" This is how the playwright tries to express the cruelty and human anguish present in and around our lives.

In the *Birthday Party* we don't know who Stanley is and where he comes from. We do not know why Goldberg and McCann have come to torture Stanley. We do not know what Stanley had done in the past and why he is running away. We also do not know why Stanley tries to strangle Meg even though he loves her. Thus, Pinter's plays are all mysterious. A similar sense of mystery is to be found in Franz Kafka's baffling novels. Kafka's *The Trial* and *The Castle* in particular are hair-raising in their description of absurd, meaningless and inexplicable experiences of the two Ks. In *The Trial*, K does not know who the Jury and the Judge are. The novel uses at times, a very realistic frame of descriptions but the menace lies in what we do not know, in the mystery that suffuses the novel.

Like Kafka's novels, Pinter's plays set off disturbing questions for the very fact that realistic expressions are lacking. Uncertain details–why characters visit others, why they commit inexplicable actions, why the others fear them–find themselves obscurely dramatized in Pinter's "Comedy of Menace". Because events and actions are triggered off randomly, unmotivatedly and apparently illogically, the world seems simultaneously non-sensical, absurd, funny, capricious and malevolent. One can rely upon nothing. What is apparently secure is really insecure. A haven or shelter does not protect. This is the essential and ultimate absurdity of the human condition. The fear or 'menace' in Pinter thus ultimately suggests the universal tragic-comic trauma of man in the universe. This is the quintessential principle behind the Theatre of the absurd, and it is at once comic and menacing. As Eugene Ionesco, dramatist of the absurd succinctly put it in connecting on the kind of plays that the Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter wrote, "People

drowning in meaninglessness can only be grotesque, their sufferings can only appear tragic by derision".

If possible, students should be made familiar through video recordings of the cinema of Alfred Hitchcock, the first and greatest master of Menace on the silver screen. Specially *Psycho* where the menace of something terrible about to happen is consistently deferred till the climax. This is the essence of menace that functions as a sword of Damocles over all of us entrapped by and in life.

The students should also learn about sub-sets or sub-genres of Comedy that may be associated with Pinter's Comedy of Menace. Brief definitions with textual examples of such Literary Types should be discussed – like *Black Comedy, Dark Comedy, Tragi-Comedy etc.*

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A Search For Subjectivity Through Self-Reflexive Texts

Premanjana Banerjee

The postmodern way of defining the self has much to do with the mutual inflecting of textuality and subjectivity. According to the postmodern way of thought both history and fiction are discourses, and history is unavoidably a human construct, a textualization of the past. The real referent of the events narrated in historiographic metafiction existed in the past, but at present it is accessible to us only through the textualized forms of documents, eyewitness accounts and archives of both history and literary knowledge. Thus Julia Kristeva uses the Bhaktinian notions of polyphony, dialogism and heteroglossia to analyse the decentering intertextual activities of both history and fiction.

Postmodern fiction disentangles the subject from homogenous notions of the individual, whether it is the freely choosing individual of capitalism or the interpellated individual of Althusserian Marxism. Foucault sees history and subjectivity in terms of power, but unlike Marx, he views power not simply as a repressive force or a tool of conspiracy but rather as dispersed through the network of relationships, which make up society. It is based on discourse, and these discourses are located within an ever-expanding intertextual network. Power structures are both naturalized and mystified, and everyday language endorses and sustains such power structures. Thus metafiction, in opposition to everyday language whose literary fictional equivalent is the language of the traditional realist novel, sets up various counter techniques to undermine the authority of the omniscient author, of realism and of closure. The genre of romance in *TheFrench Lieutenant's Woman* and *Possession* is such a disruptive technique.

The literary strategy that each postmodern author adopts is different, but all the adopted methods show a self-reflexive interest in the processes of narrative itself and the means by which it constructs both text and reader.

Alternative ontologies can be created in postmodern fiction, because the worlds that are created are purely textual, subject to erasure, contradiction, multiple endings and non-endings. Fowles's *TheFrench Lieutenant's Woman* with its three different endings and Byatt's Possession with its two parallel worlds and a postscript are examples of such self-reflexive acts. Brian McHale speaks about "nesting" or "embedding" a narrative (from one ontology) in the narrative (of another ontology) in these texts. This strategy can multiply worlds in a "recursive structure". McHale borrows the key critical concept of *embedding* from Gerard Genette. He introduces the term: "diegesis" as a projection of a primary world. A story within the primary story projects a "hypodiegetic world". Again characters in the "hypodiegetic world" can enter a "hypo-hypodiegetic world" and so on ad infinitum. "Each change of narrative level in a recursive structure also involves a change of ontological level, a change of world." (McHale113) In this manner both the notions of reality and fiction are interrogated. In fact texts often tend deliberately to mislead the reader into regarding an embedded, secondary world as the primary, diegetic world. Many postmodern writers prefer the topos of "future history" or "premembering". They can return to history's "forkings" or crossroads and write the history that would have occurred if the other road had been taken.

Parody is a perfect postmodern form for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies. It is a way of literally incorporating the textualized past into the text of the present. Postmodern fiction is strewn with frank confiscation, quotation, excerptation, accumulation and repetition of already existing images. It forces a reconsideration of the idea of origin or originality that is compatible with the ontological nature of postmodernist fiction. While Jameson sees the loss of the modernist unique individual style as something negative, and as an imprisoning of the text in the past through pastiche, postmodern artists see it as a liberating challenge, a defining and redefining of the notions of subjectivity and creativity. It helps the postmodernist author not only in bridging the gap between the past and the present but also in re-writing the past in a new context.

> Explicit use of metafictional technique, according to Patricia Waugh in *The Theory and Practiceof Self-Conscious Fiction*, (1984) stems from the modernist questioning of consciousness and *reality*. Metafiction, by foregrounding its formal existence, opposes a *naturalized* language that endorses and effectively conceals power structures. Several common epithets used to

describe contemporary metafiction are: self-conscious, introspective, introverted, and narcissistic or auto-representation. Historiographic metafiction combines the *polyphonic* arguments of poetics, historicism and subjectivity, inscribing a mutual interrogation within the texts themselves.And it is within these discourses that a subject like Saleem in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* tries to write an account of the man and the nation both born at midnight on August 15, 1947. Postmodern and poststructural identities and writings are in a never-ending journey of multiplicities, shifting and ever evolving self-formations. As Hutcheon has shown, despite his insistent, male narrative voice, Saleem offers no final point of reference; all he affirms is personal and historical knowledge as perspective. He is forced to challenge the limitations of linearity and continuity in his own tale in trying to satisfy the desire of the female narrator Padma.He is driven to say "Interruptions, nothing but interruptions! The different parts of my somewhat complicated life refuse with a wholly unreasonable obstinacy to stay neatly in their separate compartments "(Rushdie 187).

To construct such a subject in writing one needs *dialogue* and *ambivalence* (The term *ambivalence* for Bhaktin implies the insertion of history (society) into a text and of this text into history, for the writer they are one and the same.) It is the only approach that permits the writer to enter history by espousing the ambivalent ethic of negation as affirmation. On the other hand alternating between the creation of frames and the deconstruction of them is an essential method of metafiction. One of the methods of showing the function and provisional nature of literary conventions is to show what happens when they malfunction through parody or inversion. Thus metafiction becomes the genre that can voice the discontinuity of both history and subjectivity. A subject writes in these novels to grasp her existence – as a discursive construct – in the act through which the existence exists. Saussure's emphasis on language as a differential and not as a referential model gives a new direction to the construction of subjectivity and agency. He distinguishes between the language system as potential (langue) and the particular specification of that system, or usage (parole). This difference between the potential and the practice renders a linguistic system forever incomplete-able. A subject is determined by signifiers rather than being a transcendental producer of them. Meaning now exists not within a transcendental signifier,

but in the play of multiple signifiers. Every sign is a signifier who's signified is another signifier. It is this deference in thelanguage of subject-positions that makes Foucault says that the fictive is the verbal nerve structure of what does not exist. Thus by the end of Midnight's Children, totalizing narratives of history, narrative and subjectivity are subverted. Saleem writes he is "A broken creature spilling pieces of itself into the street, because I have been so-many too-many persons, life unlike syntax allows one morethan three" (Rushdie 463)

The word or sign which man uses, is the man himself. His language is the sum total of his self. Languageis determinant because all social phenomena are symbolic; again it is fragile because any particular language is just a part of the total symbolic experience. The conscious intention of postmodernism is always to expand the limits of the signifiable. Julia Kristeva calls this writing an experience of limits. Compared to the mediawhose function it is to collectivise all systems of signs, even those that are unconscious, writing-as-experience-of-limits individuates. This individuation extends deep within the constituent mechanisms of human experience as an experience of meaning. Thus in postmodern narratives not only is subjectivity fragmented and multiple, it is also never complete. Though the subject constitutes herself through language and fiction, language also always creates a gap between the image and the word, the reality and signification, and being and meaning.

A. S. Byatt's *Possession* and John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* exemplify a deconstruction of time and progress as the novels depict histories, stories, and myths that neither professes concrete notions of growth and development nor linear or chronological accounts of the progression of time. Cyclical time and the random nature of history are introduced in both the novels and are reinforced by a variety of symbols and images that appears throughout. Even the notion of the dependable narrator, traditionally considered the foundation of the historical tale, is disrupted as omnipotent voices and unreliable narrators interject themselves throughout these stories without a practical basis for their knowledge or insight. Utilizing overarching notions of storytelling and systems of belief, the authors reveal a movement away from Victorian literary modes of definitive knowledge and linear time to create stories based on the cyclical, the unpredictable, and even the impossible. In these post-modern works, words can be disconnected from their referent; random occurrence can supplant conceptions of cause and effect, and *here and now* can become indistinguishable from the past, present, and future. Undermining causes and effect is a primary feature of the

postmodern rejection of Victorian modes of linearity and stable narrative. Thus Byatt's text is replete with coincidences, like the sudden discovery of the letters of Christabel and Randolph Ash. Victorian and modernist conceptions of history rely upon a conception of history as a series of events progressing toward enlightenment, understanding, and the end of human conflict. This attitude toward history is labeled progressive history. Contradicting such beliefs that espouse the inevitability of betterment, postmodernists discard the so-called myth of history.

Foe reveals how storytellers and historians can silence, exclude and make absent certain past events. Coetzee suggest in his metafictional text that Defoe did not write Robinson Crusoe from the information of the male historical castaway, Alexander Selkirk, orfrom travel accounts, but from information given to him by a subsequently silenced woman, Susan Barton. It is Captain Smith who suggests that she tell her storyto a writer who would add " a dash of colour" to her tale. Susan Barton at first resists because she wantsthe truth to be told and the captain admits that awriter's "trade is in books, not in truth"(Coetzee 40). However Susan soon discovers—while trying to write her own tale – that the problems of writing history are not unlike those of writing fiction. She concludes, "what we accept in life we cannot accept in history", (Coetzee 67) thus dissociating history from its referent. The novel that begins as a straight forward realistic narration, epistolary inform, becomes, in the end, a discursive metaphor for the act of storytelling itself. Susan Barton begins as narrator of the novel but ends it as muse to an author (named Foe) whose own narration has become canonical even to the point of being widely-known but rarely read). The first forty pages of the book are linear—the shipwreck, the washing-ashore, the meeting of Friday and Cruso and finally the rescue. But the subsequent parts of the novel, though no less linear, become less a tale of shipwreck survival than a tale of narrative survival.

In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Jean Baudrillard speaking of the postmodernist view of the "realist" myth of order and referential progression, states that:

> History is our lost referential, that is to say our myth . . . whereas so many generations, and particularly the last, lived in the march of history, in the euphoric or catastrophic expectation of revolution, today one has the impression that history has retreated, leaving behind it an indifferent nebula, traversed by currents, but emptied of references. It is into this void that the phantasms of past history recede. (Baudrillard43-44)

The crisis of the narrative caused by the destabilization of history involves the role of myth or story in creating history. And female subjectivity that cannot find a place within patriarchal society attains in these disruptive mythical discourses of history and fiction its own voice. Sarah in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* creates a mythical entity to embrace the very marginalization that Victorian society would have meted out to her. This self-constituted identity gives to her the freedom that the socio-cultural discourse of the age would have denied to a Victorian *lady*. On the other hand Christabel in *Possession* seeks to crave an emotional and creative identity for herself in a relationship that violates the accepted norms of society. The narrative of this relationship, as revealed in journals and letters, has a distinct mythical hue of medieval courtly romances. Set within the narrated socio-historical discourses of their age, these female characters unfold not only the circularity and regressive infinity of the text, but also the self-generating female subject.

Gender according to Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* (1990) is an act, a performance, and a set of manipulated codes or costumes, rather than a core aspect of essential identity. It is a set of internalized images, and not a set of properties governed by the body and its organ configuration. Psychically imposed on the body and on one's psychic sense of identity, gender is not a primary category, but an attribute, a set of secondary narrative effects. Butler looks at how Freud tells the story of how fantasy identifications (identifications that happen in the unconscious) shape our identity (who we are). When we identify with someone else, we create an internal image of that person, or, more precisely, who we want that person to be, and then we identify with that internalized and idealized image. Our own identity, then, isn't modeled on actual others but on our image of their image, on what we want the other to be, rather than what the other really is-socio-cultural idealizations. Instead of being a gender, Butler's view is that we become one through – repeated iterations or performances of culturally sanctioned ideals. In other words *Performativity* is the discursive force through which we understand our subjectivity. This view of female subjectivity is an apt paradigm for the Victorian feminine duality of the *angel* and the *demon*. In the nineteenth century the "eternal feminine" was assumed to be a vision of angelic beauty and sweetness. Sandra M.Gilbert and Susan Gubar have shown how living within these male constructed prototypes the woman artist creates the *monster woman*. It is through her that the author conforms to as well as subverts patriarchal literary standards. The monster woman is for Gilbert

and Gubar duplicitous – she has a story to tell, but she may choose not to say it, or might tell a different story. Similarly the fictional female voice too is duplicitous. Projected in dark doubles it reflects anxiety, rage and fragmentation, identifying as well as revising self-definitions of patriarchal culture. If Western languages hold the masculine as universal subject, then for a woman to speak with authority she needs the performative. If she is unaware of the processes at work in language, it is possible that she would either be erased from language, or masculinised. Thus she must use both language and fictive structure, to constitute her identity – that is what both Christabel and Sarah strive to do through their art and myth respectively – and to subvert the roles society designates to them. Women who wish to speak with authority and are aware of the context in which they are speaking can use parody and subversive ways of speaking to undermine the masculinity of the subject. Parodic performances undermine the existing norms and power structures by mocking them, by repeating them with small differences that highlight injustices or inconsistencies. Parody is the mode that allows you to mimic that speech, but to do so through re-contextualizing it and therefore without subscribing to its implied ideals and values. Linda Hutcheon writes that parody paradoxically enacts both change and cultural continuity: the Greek prefix *para* meaning both *counter* or *against* and *near* or *beside*.

Seen from a Lacanian perspective, subjectivity is the attempt to heal the fracture that occurs between the mother and child because of the latter's entry into *symbolic order*, by assuming a linguistic position, which is rooted in the masculine. Jacques Alain Miller, a student of Lacan, initially coined the term *suture*, to describe the moment the subject enters into language. According to Miller, the realm of discourse – the symbolic order – constantly poses a lack or a gap which the subject must fill at the expense of having access to its Being. Specifically, as soon as the subject identifies itself with a given signifier – a name, the pronouns "I" and "You" – the subject enters into language through this identification, but because language mediates the subject's construction of itself, the subject no longer has unmediated access to its Being. (In Lacanian terms, Being describes the realm of the needs and the drives, perpetually characterized by a sense of primordial and endless desire for the plenitude of the Other that can never be attained). So it is simultaneously a repression and an attempt to recover what is repressed that brings about the subject. In the symbolic order words are not the things they stand for but are substitutes for those things. Thus there is always a gap, and that space between object and image is the space of self-creation, authorship

and theatricality. According to Foucault, fiction is not produced because language is distant from things. Language is their distance, the light in which they (the things) are to be found and are inaccessible. This notion of language and fiction can be aptly used by women characters who mould their identities within Victorian paradigms of the feminine. In 1845, the influential psychologist J.E.D. Esquirol posited thatthe condition of selfhood is dependent on having something to conceal: it is the very disjunction between inner and outer form which creates the self (Shuttleworth pg. 22)

This popularly discussed conception of selfhood depends on the existence, not of an inner self of thoughts and feelings, nor an outer socialized self, but a space between what is hidden and what is shown to the world. Thus there are several levels of duality in a self-constituted feminine subjectivity. As long as the space between these dualities is kept intact there is a certain stability in self-constitution, but when this space collapses and both the selves are subjected to an external gaze, subjectivity loses its coherent duality and enters the space of *difference*. Both Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre and A.S.Byatt's Christabel LaMotte face this when they fall in love. Both heroines, middleclass Victorian ladies without family support or wealth, consider themselves basically self-sufficient. Subjected to the gaze of a male lover, each experiences an intensification of emotion and thought and a subsequent widening of the space between her inner and outer selves – a more absolute, but also a more divided self. Sex threatens both the new and old self by collapsing the inner and outer worlds; Christabel, in giving in to her desire, is destroyed and remade into what "all men see women as" –double, simultaneously a demon and an angel, unable to ever discover a unified self again.

Both *TheFrench Lieutenant's Woman* and *Possession* are historical romances. The political force of romance dislocates politics from the real, which is always the hegemony of the *status quo*. Moreover romance asks the fictional question of gender even as it poses the question of its own generic identity. Thus romance is present even in realist novels. For example in George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss*, Maggie Tulliver's reading of romances become a way of testing the boundaries of gender, and at the same time it serves to show her the force of these very boundaries.

Diana Elam in *Romancing the Postmodern*, writes that romance "uses and abuses conventional categories of genre," it threatens to expose reality as a constructed referent rather than as a natural state of existence and 'is

neither realistic nor fantastic". In short, romance appears to be a contradictory term that, in Derrida's words, evokes "a principle of contamination, a law of impurity" and "excess." (Elam pg. 12) Elam adds that "romance should be considered as a postmodern genre" (Elam pg. 23) because both romance and postmodernism share a common excess: romance exceeds generic boundaries and postmodernism, temporal ones: While literary modernism might have spatialized from, metahistorical romance spatializes history: the metahistorical romance reverses the dominant focus of the classic historical romance genre from history to romance. Elam argues that the postmodern non-linear trip down memory lane is predicated on a "re-engendering of the historical past as romance." The figure of woman, through the engendering of romance, allows the past to be represented. However, Elam argues, the postmodern play of gender reveals the impossibility of a precise and exhaustive representation: "women are both determined and are yet to be determined." (Elam pg.12) De Lauretis' *vanishing point* attains a kind of culmination in The *Name of the Rose*; though the story opens with a lost manuscript and a lost travelling companion, the narrative forgets the lost woman and instead goes in search of the lost mysterious historical manuscript, thus giving a metafictional twist to the genre of romance. The romance of the text by Umberto Eco is romance with the text. The narrator *publishes* the manuscript and retells its story for sheer narrative pleasure.

Northrop Frye writes that the quest in romance is the search of the libido or desiring self for fulfillment. Thus it becomes an apt medium for attaining a *being*, which in Lacanian terms is perpetually characterized by a sense of primordial and endless desire for the plenitude of the *Other* that can never be attained. Romance with this never ending desire for the *ideal* lends to both Sarah and Christabel the quest motif that will lead them to their ever slipping and shifting selves. Thus Christabel says, "Romance is proper form for women. ....Romance is a land where women can be free to express their true natures...though not in this world" (Byatt's 373) .

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Poetry Section

Chrys Salt, *The Punka Wallash's Rope*, Indigo Dreams Publishing, UK 2017

The blurb tells us that "Chrys Salt is a widely published and much travelled poet and a happy performer of her work… has been recently promoted MBE for services to the Arts."

Chrys spent over a month in Kolkata and the North East and gave a poetic performance at the 2016 Kolkata Book Fair where I met her briefly. In this collection of verse, verse letters and aphoristic fragments Chrys meditates upon the last two hundred years history of the Indian subcontinent. She speaks in and through many voices of mothers , daughters, Sahibs and Memsahibs, young and old Indians as the poet imagines them to be involved in the Colonial project as willing or unwilling participants. The poems draw the reader into the theatre and drama of the chequered history and culture of the subcontinent where colonial masters collide with the colonized in a macabre dance of incomprehension, sudden illumination and miscomprehension that leaves both parties immersed in a continuing struggle to decipher the enigma of arrival and departure.

I shall give a detailed review in another issue but here in this brief notice I will highlight only the title poem which is a simple but fascinating dramatic rumination on the fraught encounter between two cultures, civilization and peoples who come together form "the ends of earth", to use a kiplingesque turn of phrase.

First, I give the poem in full together with the poet's notes on pages 24 and 25 of this slim but impactful volume.

Punkawallah

Campanologist of air.
Patient rope-tugger.
Whoosher of charpai.
Wafter of verandah.

Heat juggler.Outsider.
He is stone deaf this one,
Chosen for silent trustworthy discretion.
Under the gutter ‘s stink, heat
Heaves from earth and stuccoed walls.
Sweat drips in dust
Too hot for naked feet.
A rope loops round swollen foot and toe,
Snakes through as hole
To axle and pulley in the bungalow.
All within is cool and confidential.
Domestic argument.Military discussion.
The Sahib sucks his pipe,
Leafs through last season’s Punch,
Volumes of Government reports and letters.
Memsahib oversees
Ayah and dhobi, dressing boy and cook,
Grumbles how indolent the servants are.
Writes to her mother.
Hour upon hour,
His chest caves in out,
Mimics the heavy breathing of the punka.
And none will know his name
But “Punkawallah”,
An inky thumb print in his master’s ledger

Notes: Punka- a fan, especially a large swinging screen like fan hung from the ceiling and operated by a servant pulling on a rope outside. Charpai- a bedstead of woven webbing or hemp, stretched on a wooden frame and on four legs.

“Could she ever have been something more
Than memsahibs with her punkawallah?”

The authorial voice of the poet asks in this despairing and mournful

comment. That is the human tragedy of the people of the two continents who are thrown together by the "grand Mechanism" of History and Politics. The punkawallah remains a nameless thumbprint in the domestic ledger-book. He is only his function, something that pulls the ropes of the Punka, dehumanized by the process and praxis of colonialism into a fragmented thing unable to make any contact with those who employ him. It is not only the Punkawallah's tragedy but also of his memsahib. "Breed, birth, caste", position in society all separates them. The gulf is unbridgeable as the two horses tugging in opposite directions at the end of *Forster's A Passage to India* tells us. But perhaps "times are a-changing". British poet Chrys Salt comes to India where Indians of all sorts meet with her as equals and we forge a political and personal partnership and bond between Britain and the Indian Subcontinent. 3 cheers for Chrys Salt, for the poet and her people.

Pradeep Chatterjee is a Mechanical Engineer from I.I.T – Kharagpur, who is currently retired but he has been able to bridge the gap between the "Two Cultures"—that of Engineering Science and Poetry and Literature. From an early age he immersed himself in Literature and started composing and recording his poems from 1975 on. We present two interesting poems of this avid reader of Poetry who is also a creative poet in his own right.

Hail Happiness

We shall never, never be pensive with grief
Never shall we cast any tear
This life we shall always consider as
A place of fun, not fear.

In many a garb as actors new
On this world's stage we act
Merrily thus let's work together
Merrily realise this fact.

Let's be steady at times despair
Misery has an end after all
Status like continuous waves in a sea
Once rise and then again fall.

Mustering all strength with great confidence
Happily our lives let's steer
We shall never, never be pensive with grief
Never shall we cast any tear. (1978)

Holy Ambience

In places where Thou art not adorned
Where selfish motives in the heart have dawned
Where diabolical trappings abound the place
Where disturbed soul finds no solace
Where darkness devours the doleful day
Where people enjoy in a macabre way
Where candles never kindle your altar
Where forsaken lies your generous shelter
Where the thread of life is never woven
By prayers and praises of your Haven
Where the dictates of Death is the order of the day
Where in the accursed dungeon, my mind
Never the nectar of sustenance find,
Redeeming from such a demeaning ambience
Bestow me Lord, your Holy presence.

(1978)

Editor's Note on The TGI Manifesto on Education and Culture in India

I met **Guenter Grass** for the first time through S. V. Raman of Max Mueller Bhavan, when the renowned novelist-playwright-poet and political activist, came to spend some time in Calcuttta in early 1986. He insisted that I play the main role of the Boss (based on Brecht) when we decided to translate his *Plebeians* into Bangla from the German. To my amazement Grass and I became working partners in our theatre project *Biplaber Mohora* based on his play *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising* which has now become part of our cultural history, volumes being written on it till date. Our partnership soon turned to intimacy. We, in fact, became part of each other's families. Grass often spoke to me of how the younger generation of students, writers and intellectuals (those that he met in India) disappointed him with their self-seeking dreams of instant success and disorderly lifestyle. He told me that he found a great sense of responsibility, a remarkable quiet dignity, and an unfailing, unutopian practical idealism in the Older and Elder generations of Indians close to his age that he met. He gave me three examples of such extraordinary Senior Citizens; the great writer and activist Annada Shankar Ray, Kalyani Karlekar of Calcutta Social Project, and my father Ajit Roy, ex-officer of the British Indian Army during World War II. He found these three new-found friends of his to be his inspiration and role models during his visit.

Grass also found the young people in our theatre groups *(Theatre Arts Workshop* and *Shakespeare Society)* deeply impressive in their selfless commitment to theatre and collective action. So inspired was he that Grass urged me that we (he, I and us) should do something to build a great nation, like he and his colleagues of "Gruppe 47" did build from the ruins of a devasted Germany after World War II. His heartfelt suggestion was that we, in India, must wed the experience and the idealism of the old to the rampaging energies of the young.

These ideas germinated in us even after Grass left India in 1987, and was reviewed and sustained through many discussions with me whenever I was in Germany after that. Then he came to Kolkata in 2003 and helped give

shape to the following manifesto by working with my colleagues and my wife Shreela. Here in Kolkata Grass himself read this out, in front of a packed gathering in the rooftop space in our home as the *Manifesto* that the newly-formed *Tagore Gandhi Institute (TGI)* should attempt to actualize and put into practice.

—Amitava Roy

The TGI Manifesto

The Tagore Gandhi Institute for Service Learning and Culture Studies is committed to an ideal - the belief that education should empower, touch, transform, not only the lives of the educated, but also have the power to reach out and change for the better society at large. First thought of a few years back, the *Tagore Gandhi Institute* is fundamentally the outgrowth of an ideal that was sowed in the minds of its conceivers by interaction with a number of living seminal thinkers in the world, the most notable among whom was Herr Guenter Grass.

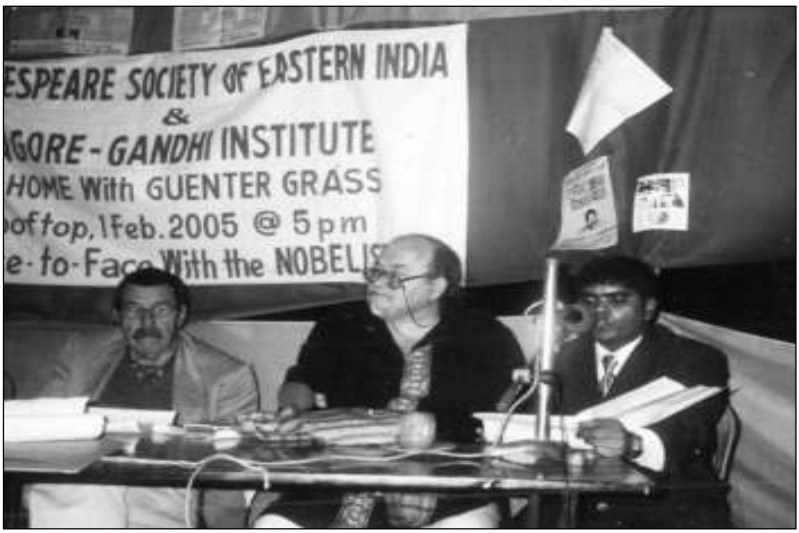
What emerged for the founders of TGI through long and frequent interactive encounters with *Herr Grass,* out of many many sessions of creative and intellectual *'adda',* from the close camaraderie of translating and putting on stage Grass's play *The Plebians Rehearse the Uprising (Biplaber Mohora* in Bengali), of friendly argument and debate was a vision (or simply a perspective) of India that we citizens of this great country tend to lose sight of, situated as we are, too close to the realities that surround us everyday. This was the vision of a mighty culture holding together a diversity of people, language, religions and customs. It was a vision too of India as a repository of values and value systems enshrined and *embodied especially in its senior citizens,* in their cumulative experience and collective wisdom.

Today, these attitudes and commitments are all the more necessary, important and relevant, given the pervasive erosion of human values caused by the temporary forces of *globalization, rampant consumerism* and *commodification.* Integrity and honesty, compassion and service, are ideals that the younger generation today is gradually being distanced from, the children of our time not having appropriate role models to learn from.

It is in this scenario of despair that the *TGI* wants to make an intervention, however small the effort may initially be. The concept we envisage is the building of bridges between the elderly and the young, the generation of our fathers and that of our children, the initiation of a learning curve by which the future adults of tomorrow's world may learn lessons about a fulfilling life and a meaningful existence from the old in wisdom. The ultimate quest is the expression in action of the realizations of the young purified in the crucible of experience.

This project of *Tagore Gandhi Institute* is part of its wider object of engaging in socially and culturally constructive work. Members and associates of *TGI* are currently involved in studies and researches in the areas of Dalit literature, Gender issues, Culture and Performance and Service Learning. The objective now is to help in the creation of a human focus in which enlightened reason will be informed by a creative imagination, passion will be fused with a critical and questioning attitude. The *TGI* desires in short to develop thinking young minds that will not hesitate to interrogate the likes of Guenter Grass and Amitava Roy, who will not stop at but rather transcend the bounds of narrow self-interest and constrained ideologies.

-Subir Dhar, Shreela Roy and Core committee of TGI



Guenter Grass with Amitava Roy and Tapu Biswas at SSEI-TGI rooftop

About the contributors

1. **Antony Johae Ph.D (UK)**: Formerly Associate Professor, Kuwait University. Life Member, Shakespeare Society of Eastern India. Author of seminal works on Shakespeare, Translation Studies, Comp. Lit, Dickens and others.

2. **Dr. Pradip Bhattacharya, IAS** (Retd), International HRD Fellow (Manchester), Member, Board of Governors, IIM Calcutta, ex-Additional Chief Secretary & Chairman State Planning Board, West Bengal. Globally renowned Sanskritist and author, acclaimed across the world for his research on Epics and its various variants.

3. **Dr. Papia Mitra**, Associate Professor, English, Surendranath College for women, Calcutta University, West Bengal. Noted for her work on Comparative Religion, Education, Sanskrit and English Studies.

4. **Pratima Das,** Assistant Professor of English, Pingla Thana Mahavidyalaya, West Bengal. Noted Translator of Shakespeare, T. S. Eliot and other Modern Masters. Snr. Researcher at the Shakespeare Society Archives in Kolkata.

5. **Raj Raj Mukhopadhyay**, Reaserch Scholar, Dept. of English, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan

6. **Aisik Maity**, Student, Heritage College, Kolkata

7. **Lopamudra Dey**, Research Scholar, Rabindra Bharati University

8. **Dr. Manisha Sarkar**, Associate Professor, Dept. of English, Bhairav Ganguky College, Kolkata. Renowned for her work on Caribbean-English Literatures.

9. **Swati Roy Chowdhury**, Assistant Professor in English, Mankar College, Mankar, Purba Barddhaman, West Bengal. Renowned Australianist.

10. **Dr Tapu Biswas**, Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, Visva-Bharati, West Bengal. Globally acclaimed for research on European and Indian Absurdist writers. Authority on Badal Sircar. Author of many books on Beckett, Pinter et al.

11. **Premanjana Banerjee**, Lect., Dept. of English and Communicative English, Jogmaya Devi College, Kolkata & Ph.D.. Scholar of Seacom Skills University, Santiniketan, India.

The Editors

Bryan Reynolds, Ph.D: UCI Chancellor's Professor, Department of Drama, Claire Trevor School of the Arts, University of California, USA.

Ronan Paterson, Head of Performing Arts, School of Arts and Media, Teesside University, Middlesbrough, U.K.

Amitava Roy was Former Director, Shakespeare Centre for Advanced Research, Rabindra Bharati University. Former Shakespeare Professor in English, Rabindra Bharati University. President, Shakespeare Society of Eastern India. Author and Editor of over fifteen books and three hundred articles and papers in national and international journals and newspapers. Globally renowned Theatre Director and Actor.

Subir Kumar Dhar, Ph.D. was Former Director, School of Languages, Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata and Professor of English at Rabindra Bharati University. Internationally acclaimed Blake and Shakespeare Expert. Author of four books and numerous papers.

Tapu Biswas, Ph.D. Assistant Professor, Dept of English and Other Modern European Languages, Visva-Bharati, Shantiniketan, West Bengal. Jt. Secretary, Shakespeare Society of Eastern India. Secretary, Tagore-Gandhi Institute for Culture Studies and Service -Learning. Co-Convener of the World Shakespeare Conferences from 2004 onwards. Recipient of UGC Research Award Post Doctoral Fellowship 2014-15.

Guest Editor : Prof. Dr. Syed Manzoorul Islam from Dhaka University, Bangladesh. Globally acclaimed for his work on English Studies, Culture Studies and Folk Theatre.

An update on UGC -List of Journals

The UGC List of Journals is a dynamic list which is revised periodically. Initially the list contained only journals included in Scopus, Web of Science, and Indian Citation Index. The list was expanded to include recommendations from the academic community. The UGC portal was opened twice in 2017 to universities to upload their recommendations based on filtering criteria available at https://www.ugc.ac.in/journallist/methodology.pdf. The UGC-approved List of Journals is considered for recruitment, promotion and career advancement not only in universities and colleges but also other institutions of higher education in India. As such, it is the responsibility of UGC to curate its list of approved journals and to ensure that it contains only high-quality journals.

This is an ongoing process and since then the Committee has screened all the journals recommended by universities and also those listed in the ICI, which were re-evaluated and re-scored on filtering criteria defined by the Standing Committee. Based on careful scrutiny and analysis, 4,305 journals were removed from the current UGC-Approved List of Journals on 2nd May, 2018 because of poor quality/ incorrect or insufficient information/false claims.

The Standing Committee reiterates that removal/non-inclusion of a journal does not necessarily indicate that it is of poor quality, but it may also be due to non-availability of information such as details of editorial board, indexing information, year of its commencement, frequency and regularity of its publication schedule, etc. It may be noted that a dedicated web site for journals is one of the primary criteria for inclusion of journals. The websites should provide full postal addresses, e-mail addresses of chief editor and editors, and at least some of these addresses ought to be verifiable official addresses. **Some of the established journals recommended by universities that did not have dedicated websites, or websites that have not been updated, might have been dropped from the approved list as of now. However, they may be considered for re-inclusion once they fulfil these basic criteria and are re-recommended by universities.**

The UGC would also like to clarify that 4,305 journals which have been removed on 2nd May, 2018 were UGC-approved

journals till that date and, as such, articles published/accepted in them prior to 2nd May 2018 by applicants for recruitment/ promotion may be considered and given points accordingly by universities.

The academic community will appreciate that in its endeavour to curate its list of approved journals, UGC will enrich it with **high-quality, peer-reviewed journals. Such a dynamic list is to the benefit of all.**

Important Note

Two journals that were certified by UGC and does not appear now on the list are *Theatre International* and *International Journal of Cultural Studies and Social Sciences*. They were removed due to our websites not being updated. We have updated our websites and are now publishing these Journals as always with Peer-Review and ISSN Nos. as directed by the UGC in the above notification.

–The Editors of
Theatre International and
International Journal of Cultural Studies and Social Sciences

THE GAZETTE OF INDIA : EXTRAORDINARY

FROM TABLE : 3B

Criteria for Short-listing of candidates for Interview for the Post of Assistant Professors in Colleges.

"Research Publications (2 marks for each research publications published in Peer-Reviewed or UGC-listed Journals)"	

International Journal of Cultural Studies and Social Sciences Vol. X No XIII
Editorial Team: Bryan Reynolds, Ronan Paterson, Amitava Roy,
Subir Dhar, Tapu Biswas
Special Issue on Classical Literatures and the Epic, Eastern and Western
Guest Editor for this issue: Prof. Dr. Syed Manzoorul Islam from
Dhaka University, Bangladesh.

Brilliant in-depth academic papers on Classical Literatures and The Epic, Eastern and Western includes

Dr. Pradip Bhattacharya on Homer and Vyasa

Dr. PapiaMitra on Epic Invocations

Ms Pratima Das: Hindi translation of the invocation of *Paradise Lost* and a soliloquy of Hamlet

Raj Raj Mukerjee on Heroism and Dharma in *Mahabharata*

Aisik Maity on Bharata's *Natyashastra*

Dr. Lopamudra Dey on Gods and Goddesses in global Epics

Other important and wide-ranging papers include

Prof. Manisha Sarkar on Women in V.S. Naipaul

Dr. Swati Roy Chowdhury on Australian Bush Balladiers

Dr. Tapu Biswas on Teaching Pinter in the classroom

Premanjana Banerjee on A.S. Byatt and John Fowles

Plus

British and Indian Poets and Poetry

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