

# dialog

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL



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ASHRAM RULES आश्रम आचारसंहिता

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. The Ashram is a place of peace and harmony. It is a place where the soul is purified and the mind is trained. It is a place where the body is disciplined and the senses are controlled. It is a place where the heart is opened and the love is spread. It is a place where the spirit is elevated and the God is realized. | 2. The Ashram is a place of service. It is a place where the devotees serve the Master and the community. It is a place where the devotees serve the poor and the needy. It is a place where the devotees serve the sick and the disabled. It is a place where the devotees serve the old and the young. | 3. The Ashram is a place of study. It is a place where the devotees study the scriptures and the teachings of the Master. It is a place where the devotees study the science of yoga and the art of meditation. It is a place where the devotees study the history and the culture of India. | 4. The Ashram is a place of work. It is a place where the devotees work for the betterment of the community and the world. It is a place where the devotees work for the eradication of poverty and the promotion of social justice. It is a place where the devotees work for the preservation of the environment and the protection of the animals. | 5. The Ashram is a place of discipline. It is a place where the devotees follow the rules and regulations of the Ashram. It is a place where the devotees observe the vows and the fasts. It is a place where the devotees practice the yoga and the meditation.                                  | 6. The Ashram is a place of devotion. It is a place where the devotees have faith in the Master and the God. It is a place where the devotees have love for the Master and the community. It is a place where the devotees have respect for the scriptures and the teachings of the Master. | 7. The Ashram is a place of purity. It is a place where the devotees keep their bodies clean and their minds pure. It is a place where the devotees avoid the use of alcohol and drugs. It is a place where the devotees avoid the use of tobacco and meat.  | 8. The Ashram is a place of simplicity. It is a place where the devotees live a simple and austere life. It is a place where the devotees use only the necessities of life. It is a place where the devotees avoid the use of expensive clothes and jewelry.  | 9. The Ashram is a place of humility. It is a place where the devotees are humble and modest. It is a place where the devotees do not pride themselves on their knowledge and power. It is a place where the devotees are always ready to learn from others.  | 10. The Ashram is a place of peace. It is a place where the devotees live in peace and harmony with each other and with the world. It is a place where the devotees avoid the use of force and violence. It is a place where the devotees practice non-violence and non-resistance. |
| 11. The Ashram is a place of love. It is a place where the devotees love the Master and the God. It is a place where the devotees love their fellow devotees and the community. It is a place where the devotees love the poor and the needy. It is a place where the devotees love the sick and the disabled.                  | 12. The Ashram is a place of truth. It is a place where the devotees speak the truth and follow the truth. It is a place where the devotees do not lie or cheat. It is a place where the devotees do not steal or commit adultery.                                                                       | 13. The Ashram is a place of courage. It is a place where the devotees are brave and fearless. It is a place where the devotees do not fear the Master and the God. It is a place where the devotees do not fear the community and the world.                                                | 14. The Ashram is a place of patience. It is a place where the devotees are patient and wait for the Master and the God. It is a place where the devotees do not get angry or impatient. It is a place where the devotees do not give up or surrender.                                                                                                | 15. The Ashram is a place of faith. It is a place where the devotees have faith in the Master and the God. It is a place where the devotees believe in the scriptures and the teachings of the Master. It is a place where the devotees believe in the science of yoga and the art of meditation. | 16. The Ashram is a place of devotion. It is a place where the devotees have devotion to the Master and the God. It is a place where the devotees have devotion to their fellow devotees and the community. It is a place where the devotees have devotion to the poor and the needy.       | 17. The Ashram is a place of purity. It is a place where the devotees keep their bodies clean and their minds pure. It is a place where the devotees avoid the use of alcohol and drugs. It is a place where the devotees avoid the use of tobacco and meat. | 18. The Ashram is a place of simplicity. It is a place where the devotees live a simple and austere life. It is a place where the devotees use only the necessities of life. It is a place where the devotees avoid the use of expensive clothes and jewelry. | 19. The Ashram is a place of humility. It is a place where the devotees are humble and modest. It is a place where the devotees do not pride themselves on their knowledge and power. It is a place where the devotees are always ready to learn from others. | 20. The Ashram is a place of peace. It is a place where the devotees live in peace and harmony with each other and with the world. It is a place where the devotees avoid the use of force and violence. It is a place where the devotees practice non-violence and non-resistance. |
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# **India and the Jews:**

## **Bernard Malamud Within an Indian Context**

**Brian U. Adler**

What makes a literature from one culture popular in another culture? Why might one author in particular find favor over others in a culture that would at first glance seem far removed from the common elements that make that author popular and readable in his originating culture? These questions have percolated in my mind ever since I traveled to India in November and December of 2008 in order to cement relationships between my university (Georgia Southwestern State University) and other institutions of higher learning, all located in the northwest state of Gujarat. It so happened that I was in India during the terrorist attack on Mumbai, often referred to as India's Nine-Eleven; as that atrocity progressed, it became clear that one of the targets of the terrorists was Nariman House, the Indian center of Chabad-Lubavitch, a Jewish outreach organization. The director, Rabbi Gavriel Noach Holtzberg and his wife, Rivka, who was five months pregnant, along with six others, were tortured and murdered during that attack. That Jews would be targeted in any terror attack is not a great surprise, but what I found interesting and uplifting was the outrage I saw demonstrated by Indians and the support expressed for the Indian Jewish population. I came to realize during my two week sojourn that my surprise was misplaced, as I discovered that Jews and in particular, Jewish American literature, are subjects that reside close to the surface in the culture of India. Indeed, in my brief foray into Indian life and culture, especially Gujarati life and culture, I came to a greater understanding of some of the common cultural elements that bridge the gap between cultures and allow for certain authors to lodge themselves in the consciousness of a culture. In my very unscientific survey of curricula at various Indian institutions of higher education, and in my conversation with Indian professors of literature, I have learned that Jewish American literature is taught often, is a popular course, and that readers tend to gravitate mostly to the Hart-Schafner-Marx configuration, although Philip Roth is often replaced by Isaac Bashevis Singer. Saul Bellow is consistently read, as is Bernard Malamud. In my informal queries, more Indians are familiar with *The Assistant* (1957) than any other novel by these authors, and I found



that, in particular, there is some knowledge in depth regarding Malamud's short stories. At one ceremonial dinner, where I was paired with a university vice-chancellor and the city's chief administrator, I spent a lovely evening conversing with the city official about two authors principally: William Shakespeare and Bernard Malamud. All the while, I was very much aware of another presence, one whose shadow looms over everything in India. That is Mohandas K. Gandhi, the Mahatma. While I was in India, I made it a point to visit Sabarmati, the ashram he established in Ahmadabad, and from which he led the March to the Sea. Gandhi's Twelve Admonitions are prominently displayed at Sabarmati (photograph; see also website; all subsequent quotations are from this source), and I will use these as a means of exploring connections to Malamud's writings. For example, I would contend that Malamud, in his novel *God's Grace* (1982), bases Cohn's Seven Admonitions not only on the Noachide laws, but also on Gandhi's Twelve Admonitions. Other points of similarity exist, however. Because of India's unique history, especially in a post-colonial context, the concepts of Jews, diaspora, the subaltern, and liberation have figured greatly in a cultural formulation that looks at Indian culture in comparison to themes prevalent in Jewish American literature (see, for example Anna Guttman's "Marketing the Figure of the Jew: Writing South Asia, Reading America").

In similar vein, let us now look at several points of comparison between Indian cultural elements and the specific writings of Bernard Malamud. In doing so, we will see that while the comparisons do not necessarily support the idea that Malamud actively borrows from Indian culture, it becomes easily understandable how it is that Malamud in particular is an author whose themes and concepts translate so effortlessly into Indian interests.

We begin by looking at some key passages from several of Malamud's works through the finely focused lens of Gandhi's Admonitions. Within *The Assistant* is a core passage depicting Frank Alpine as he tries to restore his connection to Helen after he has raped her. He recalls a time when Helen had been in his room. He remembers "her remark that he must discipline himself and wondered why he had been so moved by the word, why it should now bang around in his head like a stick against a drum. With the idea of self-control came the feeling of the beauty of it—the beauty of a person being able to do

things the way he wanted to, to do good if he wanted" (190). After such a horrendous act, in order for Frank to find forgiveness from Helen, he must assume the hard and difficult task of disciplining himself to serve others, to put others before himself, to reduce his selfishness. This focus on discipline, which physically culminates in Frank's circumcision (the Jew's method of demonstrating obedience to God and God's covenant), is analogous to the preface of Gandhi's Ashram rules, which states: "The object of this Ashram is that its members should qualify themselves for, and make a constant endeavour towards, the service of the country, not inconsistent with universal good". Gandhi's movement, and his training methods as evidenced in the rules of his ashram, indicate that one must turn from self toward others and be willing to sacrifice oneself for the greater good.

The struggle to liberate oneself through helping others is part of the aspiration toward truth, a drive that motivates all of Malamud's main characters in his fiction. What is truth? Gandhi says this: "Truth is not fulfilled by mere abstinence from telling or practicing an untruth in ordinary relations with fellow-men. But Truth is God, the one and only Reality. All other observances take their rise from the quest for, and the worship of, Truth" (figure 1). Truth is not always positive or productive. In "The Magic Barrel" (1954), when Leo Finkle tells Lily the truth, he drives away a love interest, but by doing so, he starts down the road toward true self-knowledge and development. He speaks in a paradox that is a grasping toward Truth as God, "the one and only Reality," as Gandhi says; Lily, who thinks that Leo, as a rabbinical student, has a special relationship with the divine, wants to know more about why Leo is driven to be a rabbi. But Leo responds, "I am not a talented religious person. I think that I came to God not because I loved Him but because I did not" (*Stories* 134; all subsequent quotations from the short stories are from this source). The results of such truth are harsh: "Lily wilted. Leo saw a profusion of loaves of bread go flying like ducks high over his head" (134). The struggle toward truth is painful and difficult, but truth and God are indeed synonymous, and the journey toward them arduous.

Another similarity between Gandhi's statements and Malamud's themes is found in how each handles the concept of service, service as seen as action toward others and accepting the limited but crucial role that man has in the great task of repairing the world (in Judaism, "tikkun



olom"). At the end of *The Assistant*, Frank is reading the Bible and "he had this pleasant thought. He saw St. Francis come dancing out of the woods in his brown rags, a couple of scrawny birds flying around over his head. St. F. stooped in front of the grocer, and reaching into the garbage can, plucked the wooden rose out of it. He tossed it into the air and it turned into a real flower that he caught in his hand. With a bow he gave it to Helen, who had just come out of the house. 'Little sister, here is your little sister the rose'" (245). In this vision, Frank Alpine sees that he has a role to play in terms of his own redemption as well as that of Lily's (and by implication, the world's). We can compare this to Gandhi's Seventh Admonition: "Man is not omnipotent. He therefore serves the world best by serving his neighbor. This is *swadeshi*, a principle which is broken when one professes to serve those who are more remote in preference to those who are near. Observance of *swadeshi* makes for order in the world; the breach of it leads to chaos." Gandhi's vision of service is that one responds to immediate and proximate need, serving one's neighbor in similar fashion to that of the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as others would do unto you."

Such an admonition contains an implicit recognition that The Other does exist, and that we must respond to The Other somehow. Certainly the other is a theme central to Jewish American literature and to Malamud in particular, especially in a work such as *God's Grace*, which portrays a literal other in the form of the talking apes. Running throughout all Jewish American literature, but most pointedly in Malamud, is confrontation with the Other. Emmanuel Levinas links the relationship of the other to that of ethics, making the encounter with the other central to his understanding of ethics. While for Levinas, the Other is unknowable, we can and we must bridge the gap with positive action toward the other. We, as ethical beings, are bound to this responsibility. Thus, covenantal interaction serves as the transformative action whereby the loneliness of otherness is mitigated: proper contact and interaction (*swadeshi*) remove the "shock negating the I" and lead instead to understanding and integration (150). Such a condition requires effort and tends not to be the norm, however. The likelihood of the shock of the other is always present.

Thus, a further method of exploring the other is through defamiliarization. Malamud may be popular in India because he takes the tradition of the fabliaux and modernizes it. The beast fable may be allegorical, but for Malamud, it is also literal, with a concept of the

beast as being a real, not merely symbolic, companion to man, and at times man's mirror.

In *God's Grace*, we have Buz meeting Cohn: "The ape presented his rump to Cohn, who instinctively patted it. He seemed to signal he would like to do the same for Cohn, and he presented his right buttock and was touched by the animal. Civilized, Cohn thought" (23). In "The Jewbird" (1963), "The window was open so the skinny bird flew in," and so begins the relationship between the Cohen family and Schwartz, the Jewbird who prays with "no hat, no phylacteries" because he is "an old radical" (144-46). In "Talking Horse" (1972), Abramowitz questions his existence, comparing himself to Jonah: "Anyway, after three days and nights the big fish stopped at Nineveh and Jonah took his valise and got off. But not Abramowitz, still on board, or at hand, after years; he's no prophet. On the contrary, he works in a sideshow full of freaks. All I know is I've been here for years and still don't understand the nature of my fate; in short if I'm Abramowitz, a horse; or a horse including Abramowitz. Why is anybody's guess" (329).

In each of these Malamudian examples, the Other is clearly other in that it is an animal, physically not human, but with very much a human soul. Other characters will come into contact with these radical distillations of the Other, and it is this radical contact that is at the core of the experience that will change the main character as well as the reader. How this connects to an Indian cultural perspective is through Gandhi's Ninth Admonition for his Ashram, pertaining to the "Removal of Untouchability," a radical declaration of how one will treat a fellow human being who, up to now, has been defined as The Other: "Untouchability, which has taken such deep root in Hinduism, is altogether irreligious. Its removal has therefore been treated as an independent principle. The so-called untouchables have equal place in the Ashram with other classes." The method of handling untouchables may be the most radical of Gandhi's principles, and is one that is still being processed, not only in India, but throughout the world. Poverty may have now taken the place of the caste marker of untouchability, and so the social dilemma is still present. How we embrace the unwelcome and unfamiliar other is at the core of how we survive with our humanity intact. Figuratively speaking, at least, the Untouchables exist, but so does the principle, most forcefully stated by Gandhi, to abandon it or face ever increasing peril and weakness. In the examples from Malamud

above, lessons will be learned as the humans interact with the skinny bird, the talking horse, and the ape. No other contemporary American author consistently makes such use of the animal/human interaction to depict a Levinatic transaction that in the end leads to social and spiritual evolution, and hope.

The valuation of the Other is contained in Gandhi's second rule: "Non-Violence: Mere not-killing [the animals] is not enough [for this observance]. The active part of non-violence is Love." This rule of Non-Violence extends to civil disobedience, obviously, but looked at on a literal level, the rule goes toward a radical embracing of the Other. Again, we see this clearly in Malamud: Buz the ape and Cohn the man become closer in *God's Grace*: "They kissed. In his expressive mood Buz inserted two fingers under his neck cloth and tugged at something; he handed Cohn a small silver cross on a broken chain, perhaps as a gift. One God is sufficient, thought Cohn. But instead of casting it into the water he slipped it into his pocket" (29). The deistic and tolerant pluralism evident throughout India creeps in here as well: Cohn retains the cross. Perhaps "God was Torah. He was made of words" (105), but he may also be a blue-skinned manifestation of God named Krishna. One can be open to the possible.

India as seen through the lens of Gandhi's Admonitions captures an immensely ancient civilization in only a fairly recent struggle, but one that is central to all peoples' destiny, that of the struggle toward freedom and liberation and a movement away from tyranny and oppression. On a larger scale, what we see is the struggle to remove the blockage between the human and the divine, the separation between one's self and the Other, the radical defining of and confrontation with truth. These are the primary social, spiritual, and political movements within Indian society for the last century, and these encompass the general motives within classic Jewish American literature as well. The great symbolic wrestling match between the Angel and Jacob in Genesis 32, whereby Jacob bests the angel and receives a blessing, while simultaneously having to abandon his old name for a new one ("Israel") and learn to live with the life-long damage sustained in the prolonged and violent contact with the angel speaks to all of Gandhi's positive impulses toward his compatriots: one who wrestles with God (what the word/name "Israel" literally means) is also wrestling with what truth is and what freedom is. One may contend that Malamud's

characters are Gandhian in nature: having the courage to be confrontational, to engage in the contest leading to freedom and full contact with the Other. We see this plainly in "Talking Horse" as the oppressed horse/man Abromowitz speaks of the dream that often comes to him as he sleeps: "the one that comes to me most is about two men, or horses, or men on horses, though which was me I can't say. Anyway two strangers meet, somebody asked the other a question, and the next thing they're locked in battle. . . . If riders, or horses, one is thin and poetic, the other a fat stranger wearing a huge black crown. They meet in a stone pit on a rainy, snowy, crappy night, one wearing his cracked metal crown that weighs a ton on his head, and makes his movements slow though nonetheless accurate, and the other on his head wears a ragged colored cap. All night they wrestle by weird light in the slippery stone pit" (331-2). Such a dream offers a resonance to Gandhi's eighth Ashram rule: "Fearlessness: One cannot follow Truth of Love so long as one is subject to fear. As there is at present a reign of fear in the country, meditation on and cultivation of fearlessness have a particular importance. Hence its separate mention as an observance. A seeker after truth must give up the fear of caste, government, robbers, etc., and he must not be frightened by poverty or death." A seeker after truth, indeed.

The courage to confront oppression and interaction with the Other requires an enormous expenditure of energy. The only way to arrive at self-determination is to wrestle. An individual must first acknowledge his current untenable position and then make the commitment to engage fearlessly in the struggle. Discipline and perseverance are at the core of such vital activity. Abromowitz exclaims, "Gevalt! Get me out of here! I am one of you! This is slavery! I wish to be free!" (346). Just as Frank Alpine must struggle to be reborn as a moral human being, Abromowitz must struggle to achieve liberation: "Amid the stench of blood and bowel a man's pale head popped out of the hole in the horse. He was in his early forties, with fogged pince-nez, intense dark eyes, and a black mustache" (349). As commentary to this oddly disjointed expression of humanity (the "fogged pince-nez" displaces Abromowitz into a previous century), Cohn meditates on physical creation and God's efforts in *God's Grace*: "His [God's] insufficient creation. Man was subtly conceived but less well executed. Body and soul hung badly together. Maybe next time. Cohn said Kaddish" (45). The real is

often very far from the ideal. Does one give up because the real is so far below what the ideal ought to be? Gandhi defines fearlessness as the ability to look beyond the real and the current, to see toward the better. The struggle toward spiritual birth is never a perfect fulfillment initially, and in this perspective, Malamud, Gandhi, and even the Upanishads are in agreement. The Upanishads speak of different versions of the individual, the jiva-atma as opposed to the linga sharira, a disparity expressed laconically by Malamud in the “Maybe next time” effort of the deity.

It is not, then, surprising, that Indians respond to Malamud, and that parallels can be found between a Jewish American writer of fiction and the thinker who had the greatest influence on modern India. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in her examination of the subaltern, speaks of strategic essentialism, as one method whereby the subaltern can survive. This is part of her larger critique of post-colonial culture (197 ff.). The temporary essentialist position is not unknown in Malamud, however. When Manishevitz says in “Angel Levine” (1955), “A wonderful thing, Fanny; believe me, there are Jews everywhere” (289) and when Mendel, in “Idiots First” (1963), throws out his existential question to Ginzburg, “Don’t you understand what it means human?” as he fights for his son’s life (44), these Malamudian characters are expressing essentialist positions, as Malamud slides the scale of membership from an easily identifiable (and, unfortunately, all too often persecuted) minority to the position that encompasses all of humanity. Bernard Malamud himself said repeatedly in interviews about his work that “all of it is an idea of dedication to the human. That’s basic . . . . If you don’t respect man, you cannot respect my work. I’m in defense of the human” (Frankel 40). Within an Indian context, transformed and transmuted by the work and writings of Gandhi, it makes sense that such literature can find such resonance and flowering, leading us perhaps to healing as well.

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# **Language and Violence: An Analysis of Style and Narration in Tarun Tejpal's *The Story of My Assassins***

**Pushpinder Syal**

In beginning a discussion of the text being analysed in this paper, it might first be considered whether one looks at language *and* violence or the language *of* violence. In this case the two are related – the language *of* violence in a text might enable us to clarify the connection between language *and* violence. The latter is a form of action, of behavior inflicting harm, injury or insult on others; yet it is understood that this is intentional, and therefore it is not only action but a state of mind, and of emotions that may be a mixture of anger, hate, helplessness, disgust, fear – and perhaps even boredom or, as in sadism, they may be connected with pleasure. Such emotions are rarely simple or spontaneous, they are accumulations, through experience, circumstances and situations, of suppressed fear or desire. Thus when they are expressed, they will be violent, i.e. they may impinge upon and affect others in negative and distressful ways.

Language is often an instrument for the release of violence, as is found in expletives, abuse and other kinds of verbal expression, including sarcasm and irony. In the case of fiction, there is a replication of such situations and behaviours, but it is now framed and set apart in a context of narrative which may enable an understanding of them. And this is how we have to ultimately look at the depiction of violence. When Amitav Ghosh witnessed the massacres of Sikhs and homes on fire in Delhi in 1984, he went back to his desk and began to write *The Shadow Lines*, to try to solve the problem of how to express the impact of violence in writing. He writes that recounting the events themselves would only serve to reinforce the shock, and also perhaps even underline the 'sensational' element that becomes a part of seeing or reading descriptions of these things. And yet they had to be dealt with somehow, not on the level of their actual happening, but on the level of how they irrevocably changed people's lives, and became memory, story and history. His language consequently, is not violent – at least, most often not explicitly so. Arundhati Roy in *The God of Small Things* contextualizes violence in the frame of a child's perspective, and the



childlike rupturing of spelling and syntax attempts to echo the ruptures in the child's life caused by the brutality of adult systems, codes and behaviours. Even so, there is a gentility and tenderness in the language and in its overall tone, which is to be seen in Indian writing in English in general. Perhaps it speaks of a deference to the reading public, a concession to the English speaking elite that is supposed to read these works, and wishes to retain its illusions of comfort in spite of everything. (Elsewhere, I have noted the predominance of simile in the Indian literary style, which helps in building elaborate and descriptively lush pictures, and veers away from minimalism because that might be too stark; more descriptiveness moreover, forefronts a narrator who is constructing such an elaborate frame and makes distancing possible).

Recent writing has taken further this getting to grips with the unpalatable, stark truths of contemporary India. Adiga's *The White Tiger* is stark enough, but it does not shock greatly because its language is still very close to the language of reporting, and it has a sort of misplaced insouciance in place of an engagement with subject and character. It is however, in Tarun Tejpal's *The Story of My Assassins* that the language goes straight into the heart of violence, draws it out and screams loudly of its ways and means. The novel is also more significant because it is broader in its scope in moving through many locations chiefly in the north of India, through a series of events and characters, forcing the religious communities, the urban and the rural, the English-speaking and the non-English speaking, the powerful and the utterly powerless to collide violently, in murderous confrontation. Violence is a theme, as well as a metaphor for writing and reading; and hundreds of individual acts of violence are metonyms of a larger, all-pervasive and uncontrollable rage. There is so much violence in its 500 pages that it assaults the reader in a sustained attack, and inserts a deep gender divide into the question of readership itself, with its implication that male readers participate vicariously in the abusive language, and female readers may finally be shocked out of their complacency that there is anything even slightly redemptive about male behaviour. Therefore, as I will try to show, the novel raises the issue of how we read, perhaps foregrounding the violent and abusive style in order to see how a reader deals with it, how readers, male or female, can get over their assumptions, their preconceptions about what is shocking or disturbing, and alter their perceptions in a fundamental way.

The centrality of violence in life and language in the scenario of contemporary India that Tejpal has chosen to highlight emerges through the centrality of the description of weapons in the narrative. Each character is introduced by the kind of weapon he uses. I say 'he' here deliberately, because the world of weapons is completely, aggressively and unapologetically a male world. It substantiates the truth that boys become men by initiation into weapons, and those who don't, never do. Tejpal runs into descriptive lyricism in enumerating various types of weapons and how they are put to use in maiming, dismembering, 'embroidering' and making 'brain curries' of humans, by characters who are henceforth known and named by nothing other than the weapon they use; a Rampuri knife becomes the character Chaaku, a hammer becomes the feared character Hathoda Tyagi. The weapons become characters and also the system, for example, the policeman is portrayed through the metonym of the leather boot used to crush genitals. One of the crowning ironies of the novel is the role of the Enfield three-naught-three rifle carried by most policemen. This is how the author describes it: 'This was hardware from the Second World War, standard issue for the Indian police in most states, seconded by the Indian army, and so heavy and unwieldy that it was reckoned a fleeing man could run clean out of Delhi before it could be taken off the shoulder, loaded and fired.. (its) only virtues were in range and power – so if your aim was true, you'd get your man even if he'd crossed over the border into the next state.' (p80) In the end, the dreaded Hathoda Tyagi is felled by one such rifle, fired by a wounded policeman at the fleeing man.

Anything in the world can be a weapon, and so the emphasis is on how the weapon is used. A fodder machine is used to slice off fingers, a handle of a hand-pump is used to break bones in an innovative way. This is how it is described: 'remove the iron handle of a water pump, wrap it in strips of cloth, then lay this muffled club where the occasion or individual preference demanded. Fibula, tibia, patella, femur, ulna, radius, humerus, carpals, tarsals, pelvis, phalanges. Broken singly or in combination, depending on whether the victim was expected to return home on his knees, hands, or flat out on a stretcher. Later there were no telltale marks, no incriminating weapons, just the mind-bending pain that nothing could quell. Just the unmuffled screams, the crooked limbs, the abiding fear. And the weapon was replaced, screwed on to the pump, and a myriad hands worked it up and down, and the water gushed forth, so clean and cool and pure'. (p 149) The way these acts

are described, in the cool language of everyday instruction, anyone might agree with those who opine (as indeed they do) that a mere rape is nothing as compared to what can really be done by an artist of violence.

Listing is a descriptive technique often used by fiction writers, and in *The Story*... weapons are listed, again and again. Here is a description of the Sardar's team, who arrive to wreak vengeance on the family of the boy who had dared to wield his knife on the Sardar's soft, spoiled, bullying sons: 'Sardar Balbir...the two barrels of his upright gun extending past his big blue turban. Between the rest, there were only two firearms: one compact German Mauser and an Indian ordnance single-barrel rifle. The man with the rifle had a bandolier of red bullets strung across his chest. The Mauser, worn by Balbir Singh's younger brother, was in a shiny brown, leather shoulder holster, its flap buttoned down. The rest had swords, not strung around the waist but held inside their scabbards in their hands. Others were armed with lathis and gandasas, the curving blades at their head freshly whetted...' (p140) And this is the variety of 'terror hardware' available with a gang of boys in a UP inter college: 'Sanju had a Nepali khukhri; Raja, a Rampuri flick knife, Amresh kept a knuckle duster; three iron spikes studded in leather strap he wrapped around his fist, Datun had a steel blade stitched into the toe of his boots which he could open in a flash – one swinging kick could dig a neat hole in the flesh; Aziz carried a short-handle axe, only eighteen inches, strapped inside a brown leather jacket that he always wore even in a summer of forty-five degrees; Santokh, with religious sanction, openly wore a long kirpan...' (p 50) The graphicity of the descriptions, done in the manner of giving lists of weapons, characterizes Tejpal's manner of story-telling – there is obvious relish in detailing them, as much as one can find in the description of various types of guns in novels by the popular writer James Hadley Chase – and no male reader would be disinterested. This is what implicates male readers more in this text – but women should know this too, in order to recognize the enemy, so to speak.

All through, abuse – physical and verbal – pervades the narrative. As one of the characters justifies, 'abuse is the revenge of the proletariat' (p.58) It is a symptom of anger, and is, if I may say so, uniquely suited to the fictional form. For how can an angry person vent abuse in real life without repercussions? And if a journalist is angry, he cannot really

vent that anger because the journalistic form demands commitment to reporting, not invective. True, there was plenty of invective in eighteenth century satirical pamphleteering in England, but later libel laws and an understanding that pretence to objectivity had to be kept up ensured that invective was toned down or disguised in journalism. But fiction can allow tolerance of abusive language because there is a context of character and event being built up in it, and in this context it can always be seen as being true to the 'authenticity' of character speech. So if an author is really angry, what better way than to create a context and characters who can hurl abuse at each other to their hearts' content within the covers of a novel published by a respectable publisher? And thus to spend that anger, which in Tejpal's case clearly seems to be a residue from the journalism that confronts the entire sleaze of Indian politics but still cannot say what it really wants to say, and we know what that is. And fiction also tempers the language of violence as it allows this language to come up against other languages, other voices and this mingling of various tones, inflections and nuances tells us about the multifarious functions that language performs in our whole being. The anger works itself out in the telling of story.

In this novel, in being repetitively and compulsively abusive and often not choosing to translate the Hindi invective so that the sounds of the abuse words can be actually heard and tasted on the tongue (with all the pleasure that it affords, however much we may deny it), the language functions to challenge the reader, forcing a stand vis a vis the reading which the reader must take in order to even continue with the story – in other words, the reader must stomach the abuse in the act of reading it. It also functions to signal towards recesses of the psyche that are ignored in the process of constructing 'normal' language and 'normal' narratives and points to the fact that this is not an individual state or behaviour, but a collective one, the whole of the tortured and agonized human soul itself that has no language but to curse.

The narrative is hard and unforgiving, and yet there is a core of humanity and – yes, we might even use the word – compassion. This dawns on a reader only towards the end of the story of the assassins, as the narrator reaches the conclusion of the mystery of who the assassins were, what they did or did not do, and why. In the beginning, there is a distinctly unappetizing description of the performance of sexual gymnastics by the unappealing narrator who seems to be begging for

condemnation though his cynical attitudes and abusive disparagement of everything he talks about, including himself. The woman he is sexually involved with – it would be a sacrilege within the context of this novel to call it a love affair – is at first glance a subject of his sneering and dominating scrutiny, simply a body. But she soon becomes an oppositional figure, partly still a subject of the narrator's derisive gaze and attitude of loftiness towards 'activist type' women, but more and more a questioner, investigator, and discoverer. The narrator is the first person; Sara is shown through him, and what is shown of him through Sara serves to deconstruct the narrator himself. This narrator then, far from becoming the 'knower' and 'doer', becomes almost a passive onlooker of events that happen around him, i.e. the assassination that is planned does not happen, and both in its planning and in its non-execution, he is only incidental. He is too small to figure in the large unfolding scenario of political events, and a struggling mediaperson who fails to impact even the media world. He is, as Sara calls him, fittingly in the language of weaponry, 'Mr Peashooter' – as he is laughingly inappropriate in the world of Rampuri knives and Luger revolvers. How Mr Peashooter reaches a point of understanding about his assassins and the role of his wife whom he detests and a lame dog, both of whom emerge as his unwitting saviours, is the conclusion of his story, but by the time it concludes, the novel has shown that it is much more than his story. It is the story of 'how power manipulated the disempowered to do its bidding' (p.45) as expressed in the words of the character of Sara. All through, there is an intrusive commentator who describes the miserable haunted lives of those who live in the shadows at the dark edge of railway platforms, the operation of young boys as ganglords, of women who are brutally raped without any respect to age and kinship, the hapless serfs who get caught in the crossfire of warring landlords, the police security men who can either struggle hopelessly through their service waiting to retire, or become pawns of political supremos. The backdrop of all the crimes, extortions, murders and running away on trucks and trains is the landscape of different parts of India – the wheat, paddy and sugarcane fields of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, the vulgar mansions of Delhi's rich with all their mountains of marble, the regional satrap's heavily guarded hideouts, the small bazaars with their porn video parlours, and most of all, the seats of power – a top functionary in a Kafkaesque labyrinth, 'a rodent in his castle', and the Patiala House courts, providing much fodder for

Tejpal's savage humour regarding the Indian judicial system. The exploits of Hathoda Tyagi with his hammer and the original work of Chaaku in carving up the sardar's bullying progeny are described lovingly, with a great deal of sympathetic intensity in the telling of the incidents; but there is also a lyrical, elegiac evocation of the lost world of the station rat called Chini who came from a land where the slopes were green and the rain always fell, and he heard the 'sweet music of rain on a thatch roof amid wet green trees at the end of a world he could never again find'. (p447) Apart from Chini, remarkable for his tolerance of all manners of bodily atrocities inflicted on him, Kabir M. is one of the characters who never becomes violent, though he is skilled as a thief and car-lifter, and he takes to a jail as his natural home, where he stays peacefully, carving little chicks in wood.

The omniscient narrator gives commentary at a high level of distancing from the narrative, though at times this distance reduces, and the narrative voice, the first person 'I', though distanced from the author, yet contains shades of the author, reflecting as it does a perception of the ineffectuality of the journalist's role in the scheme of things. It is the authorial commentary that intersperses the recounting of raw violence with some explanation or observation on it, as for instance in the following paragraph, where, following a horrible recounting of violent acts of reprisal, the commentary continues : 'Chacha had heard all the stories. The landlords against the tenants, the Jats against the Jats, the Sikhs against the Muslims, the high castes against the low castes, the low castes against the lower castes, the landlords against the landlords, the Jats against the Sikhs, the Muslims against the Hindus, the landlords against everyone, everyone against everyone – there was no possible combination that had not been squared off against each other and wrecked vengeance. This being Haryana, the super heavyweight in this arena was the Jat landlord, with a truly superior clout and capacity for cruelty. His chief challenger, the Sikh landlord...' (p 140) Many such interventions which are not aligned to specific characters but are general, function to elaborate the narration of the social divides and to examine them.

Thus the assassins' stories are told to enable the recognition of the fact of an almost permanent positioning of violence in our so-called 'civic' lives, deeply entrenched in our bureaucracies, policing and justice, and also in our traditional caste-ridden, feudal set ups, in a

permanent and always growing world of inequality, oppression and intolerance and naturally, reflected in our language. It is to enable the coming to terms with the anger and the helplessness it creates, and recognize the victimhood that becomes the lot of the perpetrators as well as the recipients of this violence. And, as pointed out above, just as the language threatens, it also saves. It does not utter the word 'compassion', but that is to save compassion from becoming too easy a word for everyone to lip and to glorify in a meaningless way. It stays with allowing the horror to unfold as it is, so the story always takes precedence. But in each individual story, it uncovers some subdued vein of another human reality – of human wonder, forbearance, kinship with animals, loyalty — and it does try to convince that such things also exist.

Tejpal, Tarun *The Story of My Assassins* Harper Collins, Delhi, 2009.

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# Class, Ideology and Politics of Globalization: Story of Adiga's Success

Rana Nayar

It is after more than a decade that the prestigious Booker Prize has come to an India-born author for a debut novel. (*The Inheritance of Loss* for which Kiran Desai won the Man Booker in 2005 was her second, not her debut novel). Last time, it was Arundhati Roy (1997), and this time round, it is Aravind Adiga. Apart from the fortuitous first letter of alphabet they both share, there is very little one is likely to find worthy of comparison between these two Booker sensations.

Arundhati Roy's was undoubtedly a 'rites-of-passage' novel, whereas Aravind Adiga's work is not even remotely connected with his personal life and/or milieu. Arundhati turned to journalism only after her resounding success as a novelist, whereas Adiga has ventured into novel-writing after many years as a working journalist with *Time*. Somewhere, all of this is reflected in the way he has gone about crafting his novel, *The White Tiger*, with a razor-thin prescience and clinical objectivity.

Arundhati Roy found inspiration in her Syrian Christian background and the childhood days spent in the backwaters of Kerala, whereas Adiga descends into the dark alleys of Delhi and Mumbai, to create a story of India, at once, disturbing and fascinating. No wonder, Michael Portillo, the head of the Booker jury, went so far as to say that Adiga's novel had literally 'pulled his socks off.'

While many people, including the other aspirants, are busy adjusting their socks and shoes, Adiga is well on his way to become the latest literary icon. Newspapers are vying with each other to fill their columns with articles on and interviews with him; while the reviewers are getting edgier in their bid to canonize him. Perhaps, he is zealously being hounded by the banks, too, both Indian and American (ever since they heard him say that he was looking for one) to lure him into opening an account with his prize money of 50,000 pounds.

Of course, the gaze of his publishers, like that of the eternal watchers of 'sensex,' is constantly riveted on to the soaring sales figures,



both in India and abroad. These are, after all, some of the 'professional hazards' of being famous overnight and Adiga, too, must be getting used to his share under the sun.

In the midst of all this whirling confusion, it is important to look beyond the glare of publicity and ask some serious questions. We must ask ourselves, for instance, what kind of future does this Booker augur, not only for the author (which is a purely speculative enterprise) but for Indian fiction in general, and/or Indian English fiction in particular?

We must also ask ourselves: Is Adiga charting a new territory or breaking some fresh ground in this novel, something that has never been explored before? Or is he simply returning to the well-trodden, over-beaten path that so many of his predecessors, both in Indian English and regional languages have traversed already?

Beyond that, one may also go into the question of what kind of impact overvaluation of Man Booker (media suddenly goes into an overdrive each time this award is announced, hailing it as a 'global event') is likely to have upon the growth potential of Indian fiction, both in English and regional languages?

It is being argued by a good number of reviewers/media critics of *The White Tiger* that its main strength is that it puts the question of 'class' back on our 'literary plate.' While some would have us believe that this is where the novelty or originality of Adiga's novel lies, others are willing to push the point further by claiming that the question of 'class' has surfaced in our literary imagination, perhaps, the first time ever.

Someone may compare the novel to 'the rooster coop,' about which his protagonist says, "(it's) the greatest thing to come out of this country in the ten thousand years of its history." Won't it then sound somewhat like Salman Rushdie's notorious comment about 'poverty of Indian fiction'? A media-watcher has actually said that "The book gives expression to the underclass anger, which the privileged ignore."

Undoubtedly, such claims are likely to be preposterous, as they rest upon a blinkered view of history. Once we invoke the history and its multiple burdens, such claims begin to fall apart sooner than we expect them to. For as long as one can remember, Indian English fiction has prospered, thanks to the exclusive patronage of the middle-classes,

and has enjoyed an equally exclusive affiliation with the bourgeoisie ideology, too. This was partially so, owing to the fact that novel has everywhere been regarded as a genre closely tied to the apron-strings of the bourgeoisie.

Rarely do we come across such avant-garde novelists as Mulk Raj Anand, who in *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936) and *The Village* (1939) portray the downtrodden and rural poor with both compassion and sympathy. Most of these novels are dictated by a conscious impulse to overturn the bourgeois ideology, so that fictional space for the lower classes or the marginalized groups could effectively be created.

In a way, it was the residual effect of the Marxist ideology and its strong hold over Indian literary imagination that had initially propelled it towards the question of 'class' and/or 'ideology'.

As far as the Indian fiction in regional languages is concerned, this process started somewhere in early 1930s. That's when 'the progressive movement' got off to a start, slowly seeping through different regions of India, luring scores of writers into its seductive fold. Much before this question could leap into Indian English fiction, Munshi Prem Chand, Phaneshwar Nath Renu. (the pioneer of *Anchalik Upanayay* in Hindi) and several others had already projected it through their fiction. One is reminded of Prem Chand's *Kafan* and several similar stories that deal with the plight or sufferings of the landless peasants in a predominantly feudal Indian society.

This was the phase of 'critical realism,' and the portrayal of the peasants, workers and/or the poorer sections of society was largely a matter of personal conviction, ideological preference, also a cultural necessity (this being the high-mark of 'nationalism'). In the context of Punjabi fiction, however, the phase of progressive writing started much later around 1950s, with the novels of Sant Singh Sekhon, Narinder Pal Singh and Amrita Pritam.

It's another matter that the real concern with the twin questions of 'class' and 'ideology' didn't enter the lexicon of Punjabi fiction until Gurdial Singh. It was in his person that Punjabi fiction acquired a true representative, a forceful, genuine advocate of the subaltern and the oppressed. *Marhi Da Deeva* (The Last Flicker), published way back in 1964, was hailed as a landmark novel precisely because it sought to push the socially and economically challenged common man to the

centre-stage of fiction. By doing so, he not only energized Punjabi fiction but also paved the way for re-examining the history of Punjabi society and culture from below.

Those times were different, and so were the impulses behind such fiction. Such a fiction was mainly the outcome of a society in the throes of change and transition, poised delicately between the pulls and counter-pulls of tradition and modernity. The overarching context of socialism within such stories often flourished has now long ceased to exist, both as a seductive idea and an impinging reality.

It was the growing awareness of human dignity, freedom and personal worth coupled with a political consciousness generated by Nehruvian socialism that ultimately brought Dalit writing to the fore in 1960s. And it was in Dalit writing that 'class' and 'caste' entered into an entirely new sociological equation, perhaps, the first time ever. Though Dalit writing is known to have flourished in other Indian languages, too, yet it was Marathi language and culture that emerged as its nodal epicentre.

Unlike other novelists such as Anand or Munshi Prem Chand, who chose to focus on the problems of the marginalized, despite being middle-class themselves, it's the inwardness and exclusiveness of Dalit writing that makes it truly pungent, even distinctively authentic.

Such writing was an attempt to reclaim Dalits' true voice and idiom, a form of articulation that enabled them to represent themselves, rather than being represented by the 'other,' as had happened earlier. No wonder, it was in this form of writing that the 'subaltern' truly began to rip apart the facetious, bourgeois logic of Gayatri Spivak's rhetorical question, "Can the Subaltern speak?"

In this respect, one may think of the significant contributions of Baburao Bagul, Daya Pawar, Namdeo Dhasal in Marathi, Om Parkash Balmiki in Hindi and Prem Gorki in Punjabi. All of these are vibrant, strong and assertive voices, which have not only challenged the limits of societal and political conventions, but also the literary and cultural norms.

Moreover, they have created new literary landscapes, even aesthetics that lie beyond the ken of our middle-class sensibility, much

in the manner Balzac, Maupassant and Charles Baudelaire had done in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. That's how Dalit writers have managed to re-inscribe the rules of what it means to be human in an unequal, unjust, exploitative and repressive world.

Significantly, most of these voices have emerged in the regional languages, not in English. One may ponder over this question, however, why Indian English fiction chooses to construct its sociology differently from the other Indian languages?

Why has it not always dealt with the issues and problems that perennially engage writers in the regional languages? Could it have something to do with its inherent dominant ideology per se; or its peripheral engagement with Indian social reality, or its nagging anxiety to target an audience out there in the West?

It is against this backdrop that Adiga's novel must necessarily be seen or read. For he certainly constructs the sociology of his novel very differently from the way it is being done by most of his contemporaries, especially in the Indian languages. But the question is, could there be a hidden agenda, or a definite ideology or politics behind it?

Of course, it is for the readers to ponder some of these questions as they pore over the pages of *The White Tiger*. But while doing so, they must remember that we, in Indian English fiction, are yet to witness the kind of literary movement supporting the 'working class ideology' that England saw in the Post-War period.

Even at the risk of sounding presumptuous, let me say that with all its hype and hoopla, I don't expect Adiga's novel to trigger off one such movement at this stage, now. If we do understand the history of Indian English fiction, we'd know that it hardly ever had a perceptible, identifiable movement, only passing trends that come and go.

We have writers, who either plough their lonely furrows or just keep up with the Joneses, doing what is trendy or t(r)opical. Perhaps, we aren't really as fortunate as some other cultures that have had the benefit of such thinkers as Georg Lukas, Walter Benjamin, Raymond Williams or Frederic Jameson. Critics of such stature alone could have lent credibility to our literary causes, turning them into self-sustaining, literary movements.

In 1960s, if Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams and several others were around to theorize on the working class culture; John Osborne, Arnold Wesker and Alan Bennett, too, were there to inscribe this culture in their works. In our context, apart from Dalit writing, which definitely did evolve into a full-scale literary movement, with its own historical and political logistics, our literary concerns with the 'working class ideology' have been, at best, only perfunctory, and, at worst, fitfully sporadic.

Now, this is where Adiga's story gains its literary and historical edge. He has chosen to focus his attention upon the Marxist notions of 'class' and 'ideology' in an era of hard-core globalization. This is where the 'politics of globalization' or that of the insidious market forces essentially takes over. To some of us, the magical sales-figures may appear more seductive than the actual content of the novel. Besides, let us not delude ourselves into thinking that Adiga's novel sets out to critique the invasive forces of globalization. Quite simply, he is legitimizing their pervasive sweep, power and influence.

Does it not speak for the vicious-hold these forces exercise over a common man's imagination that even a small-time driver Makhan Lal, born and brought up in Bihar (the underbelly of India), develops a strong yearning to participate, even capture this mirage/illusion of success and glory these forces prop up?

That he happens to nurture this dream in the times of 'global meltdown' is only one of the several ironies this novel gets tinged with. Variations apart, Makhan Lal's story does throw us back to the dark days of the 'Great Depression,' putting us in mind of Fitzgerald's famous novel *The Great Gatsby*.

However, the final answer to all the queries is provided by the symbolism of the title itself. It nudges us into believing that regardless of how we choose to look at the Indian reality, as an area of darkness (with its definite resonance of Naipaul's anti-India bias) or as a continent of light (not 'Circe' as Nirad Babu saw it), everyone, including Makhan Lal, simply wants to ride this 'white tiger' called 'globalization.'

And the only rules for riding this tiger are that there aren't any rules. This is a 'white' tiger (with all its racial and hegemonic overtones) precisely because it won't allow us any longer to retain our distinct

cultural identity, stripes and all.

In context of the recent 'global meltdown' (which coincided with the publication of the novel but certainly pre-dates its conception) this 'whiteness' acquires a totally new signification. This 'tiger' has been as ruthlessly bleached white as the American economy, thanks to its unreliable financial institutions and wayward 'sub-prime borrowers.'

Our altered economic realities lend to Adiga's novel a sense of urgency, even poignant topicality and immediacy. The extent to which Makhan Lal shows a typical picaro's unconcern for ethical norms in his search for personal success and glory, this novel almost ends up valorizing the dubious ethics of universal capitalism that sustains itself on the predatory principle of 'foul is fair and fair is foul'

And why ever not, when it offers such an alluring, albeit deceptive, promise of upward social and economic mobility?

For all Adiga's disclaimers, this novel fails to become "a potent instrument of social dissent and protest," and remains out-and-out a status-quoist novel. One really wonders what is it that Adiga is actually protesting against when his complicity with the 'politics of globalization' is near total.

For Adiga, globalization is not so much of an exclusionary choice as the only choice available to most of us, even those residing on the periphery or in the backwaters of India.

Only if one were to read this novel along with the recently released Global Human Index (which paints a hopelessly grim picture of rural India, where 47% of all Indian children suffer from severe malnutrition, and three fourths of its population still survives on an income of Rs.25 a day, if you please!) would the complete picture of contemporary India emerge before us!

And needless to say, such a realization makes this novel, truly an over-hyped, 'celebration' as well as 'lamentation' of our times. Of course, the paradoxes never cease to surprise us.

Whoever said that India is a land of gloomy, not groovy, paradoxes perhaps knew it better than most of us!

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## **Feminist Utopia in a Jewish Context: E.M.Broner's *A Weave of Women***

**Lovelina Singh**

*A Weave of Women*, by Elizabeth Broner, draws on feminist Judaism to express rage at a patriarchal world where women still must fight hard to achieve the authority that men have long assumed is their prerogative. Issues about women's place in patriarchal Judaism are being raised by other Jewish feminists, too, like Cynthia Ozick who laments that "when the rabbi speaks the word "Jew", I can be sure that he is not referring to me, for him 'Jew' means male Jew... when my rabbi says 'a Jew is called to the Torah', he never means me or any other living Jewish woman" (qtd in Broner, 'Honor and Ceremony' 236-37). In a similar vein, Rachel Adler ponders the question: "Have we ever had a covenant in the first place? Are women Jews?" (qtd in Plaskow 26).

In 1990 Judith Plaskow attempted to answer the question of women's Jewishness by suggesting that if women were not Jews until now, they could be Jews in the future:

If women are invisible from the first moment of Jewish history, can we hope to become visible now? How many of us will fight for years to change the institutions in which we find ourselves only to achieve token victories. Perhaps we should put our energy elsewhere, into the creation of new communities where we can be fully present and where only struggles will not come up against walls as old as our beginnings. (26).

Even before Plaskow wrote these words, E.M. Broner was among a growing number of women who were already taking first steps to form new communities through the development of new female ritual. Feminist Judaism is based on ritual because, as Plaskow explains, "In the ritual moment, women's history is made present" (59). Although women cannot change the Torah and the Talmud, together they can enact new rituals that provide a new role for women that had been denied to them.

In *A Weave of Women*, Broner puts forward an inspiring vision of the healing power of tradition and the power of the individual to alter

those traditions that exclude, denigrate or silence. In her earlier novel, *Her Mothers*, Broner details an oppressive past and an unsatisfactory present. She examines the lives of both her American and Biblical foremothers in the context of present issues in an attempt to understand the contemporary woman. Three years later, when she published *A Weave of Women*, Broner stopped searching the past because she could not find role models in either the American or the ancient Jewish tradition and created her own version of a feminist Utopia composed of "unafraid women". The heroine of her previous novel says "Mothers, you have taught me that a woman is as good as her womb. If she bears, her sons will place a standing marker where she has died. However, if she is barren, she is excluded" (168).

By the time she published *A Weave of Women* in 1978, Esther Broner was already engaged in creating new feminist rituals with other women in New York, Los Angeles and Israel. In explaining the importance of ritual in a 1981 article, Broner wrote, "Ritual displays cultural authority and thus the patriarchal world would remove woman from ritual" ('Honour and ceremony' 235). Broner's objective in *A Weave of Women* is to create a woman's community in ancient Jerusalem, the place of birth and rebirth. There women from America, Israel, Britain, and Germany gather to create a feminist Utopia unencumbered by preconceptions of a patriarchal culture. The community is held together by women's rituals that underscore life cycle events central to women's lives.

In explaining why she wrote a Utopian novel, Broner stated, "I feel that the world as it is not sufficient" ('Of Holy Writing' 268). Although *A Weave of Women* may be viewed as a recent entry into the field of feminist Utopian fiction beginning in American literature with Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland*, it differs from other Utopian novels as it is set in an actual place where contemporary women are actually enacting new rituals.

The events in the novel are told by multiple female voices because, as Broner explains elsewhere, "There is no chief storyteller of women's history—we make history together" ('of Holy Writing' 269). She describes the prose style used here as "an elegiac style, almost a kind of Homeric prose to suggest a search, a holy pilgrimage, an enlargement of woman and her pain, her search, her triumphs — when at last they



come." The heightened prose suggests the mythic nature of the work, which Broner conceived as a variation on the Demeter/Persephone myth, Simha suggesting Demeter or the earth mother who loses her daughter (255). However, even though the connection to classical antiquity is important, perhaps even more important is Broner's link to the midrashic tradition as defined by Barry Holtz:

Where there are questions that demand answers, and where there are new cultural and intellectual pressures that must be addressed, Midrash comes into play as a way of resolving crisis and reaffirming continuity with the traditions of the past (179).

Since past ritual has omitted women, Broner in recognizing new cultural and intellectual pressures, and in a desire to reaffirm continuity with the traditions of the past, creates new Midrash grounded in ritual. The first and perhaps most important ritual in the book is the birth of Simha's baby. As described in the book the birth of this baby is, first of all, feminist. Simha sits on a birthing stool surrounded by accomplished women of the community. The scene contrasts sharply with a scene in *Her Mothers* where Beatrix in the stirrups gives birth to Lena by twilight and complains about her obstetrician's disregard of her wishes to participate in the birth of her own daughter. She sardonically observes, "it was after all, his delivery" (99). But Simha's delivery belongs to her, not to the male gynaecologist. She is assisted by women who comb her hair, gather flowers, stroke the baby, and sing to it. The father is a visitor, disengaged from the scene. Feminism, born out of consciousness-raising, is non hierarchical and participatory. In this scene, birth has been removed from the hierarchical world, where the male doctor presides, to the woman's ideal egalitarian community which is based on love.

Moreover, it is the birth of a Jewish child, which must be marked by ritual, which the women name a "hymenotomy." The hymenotomy ceremony parallels the *brith nillah* (circumcision) and its purpose is "to assert and celebrate the value of daughters" (58-59). Men have sometimes viewed circumcision as an act of violence, but the piercing of the hymen is presented here as an act of love. The ceremony denies the traditional control by men over women's bodies and challenges the Old Testament assumption that women are valuable mainly for their ability to reproduce. Dahlia says, "May she not be delivered intact to

her bridegroom or judged by her hymen but by the energies of her life" (25). Miriam is acknowledged as the prophetess who with her brother, Moses, led the Israelites through the wilderness. Unlike the matriarchs described in *Her Mothers*, she is valued, not for her womb, but for her deeds.

The details surrounding the hymenotomy are part of Broner's feminist polemic. For example, Simha's baby is illegitimate, reminding us that marriage has frequently been questioned by nineteenth and twentieth century feminists because it institutionalizes patriarchal assumptions about women's role. Also, the piercing of women is an acknowledgement that, as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar suggest in *No Man's Land*, our century is marked by a war between men and women, which is often detailed in literature. The father of Simha's baby is not welcome at the ceremony as he does not approve of it. Each woman present tells the story of her own piercing by men, all of whom were inconsequential, and some of whom were cruel and uncaring. In contrast, the piercing of Simha's baby is "ceremonious and correct." Thus, the story of the piercing of Simha's baby, like all the stories in *A Weave of Women*, is a dense text rich in meaning and metaphor, and full of detail. During the ceremony, Deedee, the Irish woman is described as bored: "The Irish talk, lovely lively chatter, but this endless Talmudic tract, spiritual gossip, this daily poop of prayer!"

The stories are obviously meant to instruct and not merely to entertain. The women of the diaspora come together in Jerusalem in part to grieve over the evils of patriarchy. The women in Broner's *Weave* are angry about the hypocrisy of men who, in the guise of protecting women, injure them and force them into helpless domesticity. Although the novel is essentially plotless, it is unified by the running battle between the Home for Wayward Girls, organized and run by women for women, and various male agencies attempting to destroy it. The Home is, for example, under attack by the ministry that sends "Officers of the Peace with clubs, with truncheons" and "Male members of the fire department with wide hoses" to break up the protest march that the women organize to save Wayward (36). By changing its name to the Home for Jewish Future Homemakers, the women not only manage to save Wayward but also to receive contributions. The girls, however, "look at the equipment, at the cook books, the domestic machinery and count the months until they are drafted into the army" (43).

Hypocrisy is decried not only in the actions of the government but also in the behaviour of individual men, the most villainous of whom are Hepzibah's husband and Vered's lover; each is destructive and cruel to the women they claim to love. Hepzibah's husband, in the name of orthodoxy, terrorizes his wife and daughter. He considers himself "a scholar, teacher, and family man" (73), but he strikes his wife, and his unhappy daughter is starving because of an eating disorder. When Hepzibah is offered the directorship of Wayward, he protests because "He does not want his wife making more money than he does. He does not want his wife working after Rahel returns from school" (206). Exhibiting similar cruel traits, after abusing her and committing adultery, Vered's former lover in a speech "upholds the dignity of the family" by taking a position against abortion and birth control. He also is one of the organizers of the Male Gynaecological conference, whose slogan is "Women, leave your bodies in our hands" (152).

In addition to the state and individual men, patriarchal religion comes under attack, especially the orthodox laws concerning divorce. Although Mickey's orthodox husband is faithless and strikes her, the rabbinic court delays indefinitely when she appeals for a divorce, forcing her to remain in a humiliating marriage. The few inoffensive men in the novel like the cloth merchant, Shlomo Sassom, are peripheral. Although they provide sexual comfort, they offer insufficient consolation in a novel in which women are bruised, beaten and even murdered by men.

In contrast, women are expected to help one another and are ostracized when they do not. In the society of *Weave*, a woman is not honored for autonomous success; rather, she is honored when she helps others. The ethical system developed in *Weave* is the female value system suggested by psychologist Carol Gilligan, who has pointed out in her book, *In a Different Voice*, that women value relationship over autonomy. This is a departure from male norms, where autonomy is ranked highest.

As literature. *Weave of Women* is Broner's response to Virginia Woolf's insistence that women must develop new forms suitable to female writing. Broner shares Woolf's belief that women learn to write by reading the writing of other women, and that all women's writing is made possible because of earlier efforts by women. Just as Woolf

expressed the debt of all women writers to Aphra Ben first, and then to Jane Austen, the Brontes and George Eliot, so Broner exclaims enthusiastically about "that wonderful book by Ellen Mores, *Literary Women: The Great Writers* and the huge effect it had on me in making me realize again how we invented the novel, how we were the great writers" ('Of Holy writing' 258). E.M. Broner is, thus, clearly at the forefront of the effort to create new art forms to express women's entrance from the margins into the mainstream of contemporary culture.

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# ***Khuda Ke Liye* and the Ideologies of Terror**

**Ameena Kazi Ansari**

9/11 struck at the core of our lives and imagination. It was an event that had a cascade effect as it engendered a cycle of violence that engulfed the world. On one hand, was declared the “war on terror” initiated by governments and state policy; on the other hand, it engendered terror’s war and onslaught against those seeking to rein it in. In the subsequent confrontation and contestation of ideologies/positions that ensued, the world was plunged into a terrible vortex of violence that defies redressal. Things have come to such a pass that the “contemporary pre-eminence of terror” (Majumdar xiv) has swept through not only the discourses of politics, society and religion, it has even swamped the arena of the arts and sports. One of the spaces to be significantly impacted post 9/11 is the Indian subcontinent. It is a space that has become arena for both war against terror and terror’s war against forces in trying to curb it. Given this scenario, the subcontinent has become a region torn asunder by contradictory trajectories that counterpose the notions of nation and nationhood, religion and faith, orthodox and liberal, immigrant and native. In the contesting maze of issues that have surfaced, a major dimension is that of the crisis of identity and faith that the Muslim world faces today.

Born out of this ferment of crisis and circumstance is the Pakistani film, *Khuda Ke Liye*. It has received much critical attention and acclaim as it explores the milieu and psyche of individuals caught in the tumultuous realities of the 9/11 aftermath. In engaging with the realities of Pakistan, the film metaphorically transcends that national space by foregrounding the contradictions and divides that exist in the Muslim world. In positing this, *Khuda Ke Liye* becomes a metaphor for the lived reality of our world. And if at all there is an implicit angle in the film, it is recognition of the diverse harmonies that need to be inculcated to “live and let live.” Director Shoaib Mansoor creates a filmic text which is an assertive foil to the extremism and rigid interpretation of religion that bothered him, and triggered the creative artist within him.

*Khuda Ke Liye* spans three distinct geo-political zones as the drama unfolds in Pakistan, Britain and the United States. Though each zone reflects a slice of Muslim life, psyche and realities, the film is

essentially a human interest story that addresses civil society. As the camera confidently strides through three continents, it is able to achieve two landmarks. The first one is the confidence that the film exudes in portraying the insidious, multifaceted responses that Muslim life and faith evokes; the second is that it sensitively captures and conveys the stranglehold that power structures within the Muslim world endeavour to exercise.

These two landmarks are achieved through the leitmotif of binaries that underline the realities within the film. In foregrounding these binaries, the filmic text reaches out to audiences outside the subcontinent's jurisdiction and discourse. These binaries symbolise the contending structures of power within socio-religious frameworks. The film shows how conflicting interests of power grapple with each other. Some of most significant binaries foregrounded in the filmic text are through:

- self-proclaimed guardians of religious values who violently seek to impose their will
- siblings who fall prey to conflicting ideologies
- women who have to submit to men of diverging views and different spaces
- the treatment that a state apparatus reserves for its citizens and non-citizens
- the ideology of "music-for-music's-sake" pitted against that which prescribes "no music-for-religion's-sake"

The film strongly underlines the binary signification that lies behind characters shown imposing their will. On one hand are ranged clerics like Maulana Tahiri, said to depict the real life Maulana Tariq Jamil, whose brimstone-and-fire sermons rouse young, impressionable minds into blind belief that dehumanizes them. On the other, there are other saner voices like Maulana Wali whose knowledge and erudition call for introspection, change and adaptation in the very minds that have been tainted by the propaganda of the former. *Khuda Ke Liye*, thus, subtly invokes the clash of interests in the domain of power exercised by the clergy—the fire-spewing, rabid mullah versus the gentle, liberal, humanist one.

The second binary signification juxtaposes the conflicting ideologies of siblings, the two brothers, Mansoor and Sarmad. Sharing the same liberal ethos and passion for music, these two young men are shown to part ways, both literally and metaphorically, when they set out to establish themselves in life. While Mansoor joins a music school in the United States to hone his musical talent, Sarmad joins the Taliban to reiterate the rejection of music by defenders of the Islamic faith. In portraying these choices, the filmic text weaves together the dichotomies of impulse that are born out of the emotional and political strife that the interpretation of faith engenders. In the destinies of the two brothers is conveyed the targeting of individuals by mechanisms and agents of not-to-be-questioned orthodoxy which demands submission to its ideology.

The third binary that *Khuda Ke Liye* posits has to do with the position of woman vis-à-vis man against backgrounds that are Pakistani/ "Eastern" or American, British/"Western." In an obvious irony, the film portrays the double standards that society everywhere has for the man-woman relationship. The hypocrisy of the live-in relationship of Mary/Mariam's father and a white, British woman is counterposed with Mary's own tragedy when her father resorts to trickery to bind her in a marriage with cousin Sarmad. This is done so as to ensure that her relationship with Dave, a white Britisher, is severed forever. While enjoying the sexual freedom that the West has to offer, a father has no qualms about pushing his daughter into a stifling marriage. Caught in the bind of this marriage, the daughter has to reconcile not only with an unwanted man but also with his way of life that is even more stifling and obnoxious. The time that she spends in a remote Pakistani village after her forced union highlights the realities of a space and another facet of the way of life wherein the writ of the Taliban runs unopposed, and emphasises the sub-human status that women caught in the bind of Taliban ideology have to endure.

The fourth binary is conveyed through the story of Mansoor and Janie. The American girl, Janie, is a contrastive foil to Mary. Janie shares Mansoor's passion for music, and marries him. In this bonding is conveyed another hypocrisy. It is the treatment that the world's greatest democracy reserves for its citizens and the suspicion that it harbours for visitors who happen to belong to a region that threatens its interests and security. Mansoor is captured by FBI officers when a

drunken man accuses him of being a terrorist after 9/11. In a chilling reminder of what has been the fate of such visitors to the United States, *Khuda Ke Liye* shows how humane norms of investigation are abandoned to force information out of a young man whom the state apparatus declares guilty without any trial. Strongly suggestive of Guantanamo Bay, the film contains a strong indictment of repressive state power that is frequently used to break down and mentally decapitate individuals through torture that violates the basic tenets of human rights.

All these binaries emanate from the issue that forms the crux of the drama—that is, the arts, especially the field of music. The film brings to the fore the clash of views on the status of arts and music in Muslim societies. This is linked to the larger debate of what is *halaal* (lawful or legitimate) or *haraam* (unlawful or illegitimate) in these societies. Mansoor and Sarmad symbolise contradictory positions/ideologies in this regard. In their stances is reflected a dichotomy of perception and fierce debate regarding the place of music in the Muslim way of life. Mansoor's stance makes a case for "music-for-music's-sake," a view clearly eulogised in the film that celebrates the rich confluence of eastern and western traditions in its musical scores. In contrast, Sarmad's stance underlines an outlook that can best be defined as "no music-for-religion's-sake." Two brothers represent dichotomy of opinion regarding the place of music in Muslim life.

One shade of Muslim opinion has it that music and the arts are vehicles of the devil and, therefore, inimical to morality. They are to be shunned in all eventualities. Other shades of opinion trace the tradition of music in Arab societies to justify its acceptability. It is a tradition that mediaeval scholar Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani, in his classic *Kitab Al-Aghani*, records as the history of Arab poetry and music. His assessments therein are drawn from Ishak al-Mousuli, the man who established the first school of music in Baghdad during the reign of Caliph Harun Rashid. Hafiz Ibn Hajr Asqalani, another medieval Muslim scholar, in *Fath el-Bari* refers to prophet Dawood's musical instrument that he played while singing. Nearer home, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, freedom fighter and erudite scholar of Islam, wrote in *Tazkira* that music was a kind of panacea; that he could forego many things, but not music.

It is the latter shade of opinion that clearly finds favour with the film's director. This is brought out in the stark contrast between the



soft spoken assertions of Maulana Wali and fiery testimony of Maulana Tahiri in court. In the sensitively portrayed voice of moderation and humility, Maulana Wali explains in a Pakistani court that music is not *haram* in Islam as is illustrated in the reverence accorded to prophet Dawood whose melodious voice overwhelmed many a listener. In reacting against the fundamentalist position regarding music, director Shoaib Mansoor underlines the power politics that govern preaching and proselytizing in the name of faith. The audience is swept into a world of conflicting ideologies that pose many challenges to viewers. The subtle pointer always is towards the havoc wrought by misguided state apparatus and policy on one hand and ill considered reiteration and justification of one's religious identity on the other.

*Khuda Ke Liye* suggests that honourable and humane retrieval from such situations can only be sought through a liberal consciousness born out of the experience of inhumanity and deceit. To underline this position, the film focuses on contrasts. On one hand, there are misbegotten, misled characters who try to sanctify their personal conflicts as war they wage on enemies of their faith and ideology. On the other hand, there are softer, saner voices who try to invoke a spirit of live-and-let-live by respecting people and opinions that are contrary to their own. Each of these characters, however, is made to voice their concerns against the backdrop of the American intervention in Afghanistan, and its uncontrollable repercussions. The film subtly suggests that there are three centres/voices of power which are the dominant players in our subcontinent. The filmic text foregrounds these three as the voice of liberal sanity, the voice of extremist orthodoxy, and the voice of unnatural, misguided assertion. The audience is left with little choice as to their authenticity and integrity.

While severely jolting the fundamentalists in Pakistan (who issued fatwas warning people against watching the film), *Khuda Ke Liye* has activated moderate opinion and acclaim both in the country where it was made as well as elsewhere. Testimony to this are the Award for Best Picture at Cairo's 31<sup>st</sup> International Film Festival and the Best Foreign Film Award at the Muscat Film Festival. It is a bold and honest film which contextualises the dictum that ignorance leads to suspicion and suspicion engenders hatred. It can aptly be considered "a narrative of contestation" (Ranasinha 2) which presents a birds-eye view of the complexities that confront the subcontinent today by making a strong

statement about the mindset and the power equations in that prevail. Implicit in the story of Mansoor and Sarmad are some vital questions that not only Pakistan but all of us need to address in order to assert our place in the polity of nations. One of these questions relates to the role that religion has to play in statecraft. In this regard, there is a clear indication that religion and nation are distinct and separate, and that this distinction is desirable.

Another vital issue obliquely suggested is the need for developing a suitable protocol to protect travellers abroad who, like Mansoor, invite suspicion and unwarranted punishment for a crime they never commit. Yet another concern has to do with a conscious effort that a government must make in order to evolve a civil society apparatus which can fruitfully intervene and assert itself in the face of fundamentalism. Though this concern in the plot is contextualised within the framework of the Indian subcontinent, it is a concern which *Khuda Ke Liye* subtly suggests impacts the entire world.

The concerns thrown up in the course of the film should evoke introspection and redressal by civil society of all states in the subcontinent. It is a region where fundamentalism and terror have successfully battled and come to occupy the space vacated by an ever-shrinking civil society and the weakened forces of liberal humanism. Shoaib Mansoor's film underlines the irony of a situation in which a country's liberals are attacked by their own countrymen for being "western" and then labelled "fundamentalists" by the West when they step out of their own country.

Seen from a historical perspective, the film is a cameo of the ramifications of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan which continue to impact the world till this day. The film does a quick run through of events—CIA funding Muslims to oust Russia from Afghanistan, the glorification of the *mujahideen* who contributed to the success of this venture, the resultant flood of arms in the region, the power vacuum and the bloodletting that followed Russian departure, the inability of the United States to rein in the blue-eyed *mujahideen* who perceived the US in the same imperial mould as Russia, and the eventual unleashing of a deadly campaign against the Americans perceived as the new enemy countering the interests of the region.

In an ironic reversal of roles, the *mujahideen* were re-named

“terrorists” and a campaign was mounted against them by the Americans who perceived their old allies as hurdles in their strategic interests in the region. This, *Khuda Ke Liye* emphatically states, is the backdrop to, and the harbinger of, 9/11. The camera flits across time and space in order to justify this. It is a case of history repeating itself as it reiterates the realities which the erstwhile British Empire had to contend with in its heydays. Never could the might of its Empire really control the tribal belt comprising an area of intersecting boundaries between Afghanistan and Pakistan. And till today, with all the resources at its command, America and its allies have failed to rein in the region’s violent reaction to its policies. Shoaib Mansoor considers 9/11 to be an extension of this violence on American shores. In *Khuda Ke Liye*, he depicts the United States both as a victim and the victimiser. The chilling terror of that event on American shores is offset by the equally chilling treatment meted out by the FBI to people suspected of having Al Qaida links. In the film, the one point that is driven home is that all power centres, whether national, political or ideological ones, are aggressively assertive and ever-willing to battle it out with others for survival.

In the case of *Khuda Ke Liye*, the facets of the Muslim world are shown in contrast to the non-Muslim ones. Pertinently, the film depicts Muslims in a light that most non-Muslims generally fail to perceive. The film’s director chose to translate the title—*Khuda Ke Liye*—into a metaphorical version—“In the Name of God”—rather than the more literal and idiomatic “For God’s Sake,” which evokes an angle of negativity. This choice of translating the title underlines the fact that this film, in a very real sense, symbolises “art of society, by society, for society.” Whether the issue is faith or arts or politics, the emphasis throughout the film is on essence, not appearances; on the spirit rather than just the letter.

The “metaphor of space is mediated by the dimension of time” (Ranasinha 5) as *Khuda Ke Liye* negotiates with cultural difference and experiential diversity across three continents. The filmic text is indeed a nationalist discourse of resistance produced within the director’s country of origin. This discourse undercuts the notion of a monolithic state by dramatising the paradigms of faith, gender and diaspora. The filmic text is embedded within a context that is both historicised and humanised. *Khuda Ke Liye* contextualises the fact that “ultimately, both states and terrorists punish people for the acts of their

governments” as it is an audio-visual text which “personalizes the political and politicizes the personal” (Majumdar xx-xxxvi). On one hand, it is a narrative about that power which asserts its legitimacy through perspectives stressing the universality of humane values. On the other hand, it is an offensive launched against the strangleholds of orthodoxy by problematising conditions and contradictions that affect our world.

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# **Faces of Imperialism: Colonialism, Nationalism and Globalization in Aijaz Ahmed's *Lineages of the Present***

**Jasminder Singh Dhillon**

Aijaz Ahmed in his book *Lineages of the Present*, subjects to rigorous scrutiny the claims of many western Marxist thinkers like Bill Warren, who wrote a book entitled *Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism* wherein it has been made out that imperialism in the form of colonization of the third world countries has immensely benefitted the backward economies. It is claimed that imperialism has helped to industrialize the peripheral states. It also provided technology for their growth, leading eventually to their robust social, economic, moral and political development.

In *Nation and its Fragments*, Partha Chatterjee mentions two British historians, Edward Thomson and G.T. Garratt, who take up a similar line argument. With reference to colonization of India, these historians wrote in their book, *Rise and Fulfillment of British Rule in India*:

Whatever the future may hold, the direct influence of the west upon India is likely to decrease. But it would be absurd to imagine that the British connection will not leave a permanent mark upon India. On the merely material side, the new federal government [the Government of India reorganized under the 1935 constitutional arrangement] will take over the largest irrigation system in the world, with thousands of miles of canals and water-cuts fertilizing between thirty and forty million acres; some 60,000 miles of metalled roads; over 42,000 miles of railways, of which three-quarters are state-owned, 230,000 scholastic institutions with over twelve million scholars; and a great number of buildings, including government offices, inspection bungalows, provincial and central legislators. (Chatterjee 14)

They also talk about how the British established for the Indians an effective defense system constituted by the Indian Army and the Indian Police Force, ably administered by a trained Indian bureaucracy.

Aijaz Ahmed, painstakingly, tries to debunk such twisted

representations ascendant among Euro communist parties and other intellectuals of the west. They try to masquerade the exploitative interests of the white imperialists under the garb of 'civilization'. Ahmed, in his essay *Imperialism and Progress*, forcefully argues that imperialism is a 'rapacious force within the capitalist-economic system'. He says that to regard imperialism as benevolent and generous, smacks of a deliberate intellectual amnesia on the part of western thinkers. They are aware that if they own up authentically the macabre saga of plunder and mutilation of the colonized nations, it would "inter-alia mean rapture[ing] and dismantling of the structures of imperialism inherent in their existence" (4).

Ahmed tries to make transparent, the opacity of the much complacent and extreme rhetoric, which tries to hide the imperialism of the colonists in a linear discourse of positivism and progress. He quotes lines from a letter written by Karl Marx, sometime before his death. In this letter to F. Danielson, Marx asserts:

...what the British take annually in the form of rent, dividends from railways useless for the Hindoos, pensions for the military and civil servicemen, for Afghanistan and other wars, etc, etc... What they take from them without any equivalent and quite apart from what they appropriate to themselves annually within India-speaking only of the value of the commodities that Indians have gratuitously and annually to send over to England- it amounts to more than the total sum of income of the 60 million of agricultural and industrial laborers of India. This is a bleeding process with a vengeance (22-23).

Ahmed effectively deconstructs the façade of imperialist ideology and its linear positivistic, progressive discourse. Ahmed says that in all the third-world colonized countries, the capitalist 'power bloc' indulged in systematic and ruthless loot and plunder, but tried to hide all the faults, sins, and brutalities of their system (28) under the rhetoric of 'colonial civilizing mission'. A parallel can be drawn in the conquest and organized loot of Congo, by King Leopold II of Belgium (1865-1909), a mention of which is found in Nicholas Harrison's *Post Colonial Criticism History, Theory and the Work of Fiction*. Having exhausted all his resources by indulging in extravagant luxuries, King Leopold became desperate to replenish his coffers. He took huge loans from the government of Belgium, forfeiting the claims of his progeny to the

throne of Belgium, in the bargain. With the loan thus raised, he sent explorers around the globe, searching for an arena which would satisfy his inordinate dreams of power and pelf. He ultimately settled on Congo, which he pauperized with cold-blooded determination. He hid his brute ferocity, his cant and hypocrisy, in the smoke screen of the 'civilizing mission'. In 1876, he convened a grandiose 'African Geographical Conference' and said to the huge congregation of eminent explorers, missionary chiefs, military men, anti-slavery humanitarians and the like:

...the subject which brings us together is one that deserves in the highest degree to engage the attention of the friends of humanity. To open to civilization, the only part of our globe which it has not yet penetrated, to pierce the darkness enshrouding entire populations, that is, if I may venture to say so, a crusade worthy of this century of progress... Need I say that in bringing you to Brussels, I was guided by no egotism? No, gentlemen, Belgium may be a small country, but she is happy and satisfied with her fate (Harrison 12).

So happy, satisfied and self-effacing a gentleman was he, that in the course of a decade, post 1876, he rose from a position of bankruptcy to a position of profit to the tune of 43,966,000 francs-a profit born out of a murderous scramble for rubber and ivory, killing around a third of the population of Congo (around 13 million people) in the process. Of course, he got constructed, by force, 241 miles of railways to carry with utmost speed, rubber and ivory, to the European market.

In a metaphor that is echoed elsewhere in Africa, local legend along the railway line has it, that each (sleeper) cost an African life and each telegraph pole a European life. Even in the rosy official figures, the railway death toll was 132 whites and 1800 non-whites (Harrison 15). Around 60,000 forced labour, adults and children alike, were employed for the project and upon completion, he got installed a sculpture of 'three emaciated and destitute African porters' on a pedestal with the words "*The Railway freed them from Porterage*". When we are brought face to face with the brutal facts that when the workers did not bring the stipulated amount of rubber and ivory, they were killed and their body parts, carried into the factories as proofs, all in the name

of 'colonial civilizing mission', can the irony be missed? (Harrison 15). Smack, in the face of such macabre exploitation, the western intelligentsia, has the temerity to say that colonialism was never imperialistic in ideology and asserted that colonialism never contributed to the backwardness of the peripheral states. The unprecedented accumulation of capital in the metropolitan centers of the west was not because of acquisitions and forcible opening of markets in the colonies. Any explanation which condemned the west, for the sufferings of the colonized countries, was regarded as a mere figment of the imagination of the third world obscurantist thinkers. Europe, according to the western intelligentsia, gained in strength (in terms of capital), and identity because of 'internal transformation' of the relations of production and means of production. Accumulation of capital from the colonies was, at best, only marginal. The imperialists never acknowledged the fact of their highly repressive military, economic and social structures.

Ahmed argues that such assertions are merely polemical and are made by ignoring the specificity of historical periods and other social aspects. Consequently, they have no theoretical or empirical validity. Citing numerous examples from the third world countries, he points out how imperialism and colonialism destroyed their traditional (pre-colonial) systems of production and created markets extensively for metropolitan products. This imperialistic agenda of 'opening-up new world markets', led to a deliberate and discriminatory industrialization. Certain countries gained (Brazil, Korea, etc) while others were left poorer than they were before colonization (Africa). Thus, industrialization was not exactly for the upliftment of the backward states. On the contrary, industries were established to reap the benefits of cheap, captive labour, tax-benefits and other such incentives. It also led to debt-traps and the metropolitan centers became indispensable for the survival of these developing states. Finance, transport, communication, and even the products manufactured were those that suited the consumerist demands of the metropolitan centers. Industrialization of the third-world countries, led to surplus production. As a result, competition between these states for markets increased. In the game of shrinking markets and growing surplus, the peripheral states were forced to sell at cheaper rates. In this vicious trap, the metropolitan centers were the gainers. Ahmed agrees with Samir Amin, who gave the concept of 'peripheral capitalism', which refers to



the deepening internalization of industrial production process to locate different branches of industry and whole types of technology in different part of the capitalist system with a view to earn maximum profits(13).

So, the index of progress should not be linked with the number of industries established but the social relations of production.

Continuing with his line of argument, Ahmed says that the complex ideology of Imperialism / Capitalism creates an illusion – a false consciousness which distorts and even inverts actual historical conditions. But the imperialist colonizers covered up the viciousness of their capitalist ideology by projecting democracy and capitalism as ‘Siamese twins’. It is purported that industrialization brings material upliftment. It ultimately leads to a better and more democratic society. Marx asserted, that the mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life processes in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness (Webster 60).

Ideally, therefore, democracy should have come with capitalism taking root in India and the third world countries. Rather, instead of democracy, we find that most of the third world states are plagued by retrogressive nationalisms or military despotism.

How does one come to terms with the third-world nationalism? Ahmed argues that it is true that industrialization brings in material change, but selective industrialization breeds contradictory impulses. He says that in such a milieu of selective industrialization, the colonizers tinkered with the entire ‘signifying practise’ of the colonized periphery. Since industry was hoisted from above and suited only the metropolitan capital, the desired social change in the peripheral states never happened. Where Marx seems to have erred, is to overlook the race angle in the imperialist project. Ahmed says that it is not just industrial development which is important, but we need to be aware that ‘cultural productions are hegemonically mediated and determined by the metropolitan state.’ Consequently it is always the male, white and Tory who have really prospered by such ideological signifying practise.

Apart from selective and discriminatory industrial establishment,

the colonial state was based on the 'rule of difference and preservation of the alienisms of the ruling group' (Chatterjee 26). In the name of putting an end to barbarous practises, in the Indian context, the imperialists played the different classes and 'jatis' against each other. On the one hand, they looted India; on the other, they pumped in money to create a class of Indians who were indoctrinated in European tastes and morals. In the name of modernizing the outlook of Indians they brought in legislation seemingly favoring the lower castes and women etc. But they deliberately did it in a semi-democratic and authoritarian way. They pitted the landlords against tenants, the high class against the lower. Instead of eradicating discriminatory practises, they bred and stabilized them. The intention was to disturb the contentment of the masses, who were mainly ignorant, superstitious, fanatical and intensely suspicious. Modern institutions and technology could not weaken the hold of caste in any way. Although,

the necessities of cheap railway travelling compelled people to crowd into carriages and touch one another closely for many hours...[and] the immense practical advantage of a copious supply of good water from the standpipes in the larger towns were permitted to outweigh the ceremonial pollution which undoubtedly took place... such merely superficial modifications of caste-regulation did not touch the essence of the institutions... the Brahman who [rode] in a third class carriage or [drank] pipe water [did] not think the better of his low-caste neighbor than when he travelled on foot and drank from a dirty well... So long as Hindus continue to be Hindus, caste cannot be destroyed or even materially modified (Chatterjee 17).

It was a milieu full of contradiction. People were exploited to the hilt (famines in Bengal left one million dead in 1866, half million dead in 1869 in Rajasthan, five million in 1876-78, 1 million in 1899-1900).

The cultural practices were 'tinkered with' in the name of democracy and civilizing mission. At the same time an intermediate class was being created through the spread of English education. Ahmed quotes Charles Trevelyan, who wrote in his book *On the Education of the People of India* :

English education will achieve by gradual reform, what any other method will do by revolution. The nations will not rise against us

because we shall stoop to raise them – we shall exchange profitable subjects for even more profitable allies... and establish a strict commercial union between the first manufacturing country and the first producing country of the world. (35)

The whites deliberately created an intermediate class. The landed elite of India, in their desperate anxiety, felt compelled to forge an alliance with the metropolitan ruling class to safeguard their economic and class interests. Yet, on all accounts, they found their interests compromised. It was only the metropolitan bourgeoisie that thrived.

In such a milieu of discontent, the landed elite and middle class Intelligentsia (although their interests conflicted), thought of using the Proletariat to their advantage. The deliberate tinkering with the centuries of old religious and casteist divisions provided them with the much needed catalyst. Simultaneously, the inflamed cry of 'religion in danger' was used to camouflage their desire to replace the whites in positions of power.

Ideally, nationalism should have created a declassed society, and forged a nationalistic identity transcending caste, class, religion etc. The intelligentsia should have joined forces with the oppressed, exploited and silenced proletariat, but what came to the fore was a struggle for class-hegemony. The colonized elite and the middle class experienced a 'split consciousness'. With respect to the highly factionalized and fragmented Indian society they experienced a dominant subject position. However vis-à-vis the colonizers, they experienced subordination. This twin experience led to the emergence of pseudo-nationalism, where all that mattered was struggle for hegemony.

Since nationalism was a European import, the ideology governing it obviously had only to be bourgeoisie. So, the imperialists used nationalism to conquer while the colonized bourgeoisie used it to counter them. Aijaz Ahmed, therefore, argues that nationalism is just another face of imperialism and cannot be looked upon as a positivistic cultural form or an oppositional cultural practice. Like the colonialists who exploited the Indian masses, the nationalists too appropriated the potential of using them to counter colonialism. Commonly though, both looked down upon the masses, regarding them as ignorant, superstitious, fanatics.

In thus proceeding towards their opposed political objective – located, however, within the same historical career of the modern state – both colonial and nationalist politics thought of the peasantry as an object of their strategies, to be acted upon, controlled and appropriated within their respective structures of state power. (Chatterjee 159)

So, nation just became an ‘imagined community,’ unforgiving and claustrophobic in its own way. It is true that there was a lot of intercultural ferment, leading to exciting new areas of experience, and a sort of unprecedented cultural vibrancy; yet, it institutionalized a bourgeois state form, introduced by colonial rule. In the third world countries, the nation-state served pro-imperialistic ends and was essentially xenophobic. This was the outcome of the complicity of the dominant class or the power bloc. It is the power-bloc which determined the trajectory of nationalism. Therefore, it essentially remained capitalist and bourgeois. As Anderson said, ‘nationalism was never just an attempt to create a sovereign state, but it was also an attempt to create new kinds of market economy’.

Initially, the nationalists seemed to transcend division of caste, language etc. But once independence was achieved by using the masses as ‘canon fodder’, the power-bloc dumped all ideas of a truly sovereign state. Thereafter, nationalism became revanchist and chauvinistic. Since, the very concept was elitist; it remained incapable of divining any lasting solution or portents for the future. It has created discernibly no new trajectory in the history of politics of the region.

Like the colonist rule which was based on difference, nationalism, too, came to be based on difference— linguistic, religious, racial, casteist and exclusivist. It also came to be based on majoritarianism, etc. It could not favour multilingual, multidenominational, multiracial political solidarities. It ultimately became a close cousin of racism.

Immediately after Independence, the intermediate class began to exact its pound of flesh, because the post-colonial state appropriated all the aspects of the colonizers. The schisms created by the colonizers, were deeply entrenched. So, the power-relationship between the ruling Indian elite and the ruled masses remained skewed and asymmetrical leading to the trauma of internal conflict among various Indian communities. The intermediate class had only one loyalty —their self

interest — and for it they organized their political practises to align with the landed elite, knowing that the balance of power was in their favour. Since imperialism usually inserts itself into the dominated periphery in collaboration with those upper classes, the intermediate class stretching between the proletariat and capitalists used the state which the colonizers had made overwhelmingly powerful; to dominate the whole civil society. Thus, the intermediate class validated the prophetic words of Trevelyan, who asserted that these 'English speaking men' would be the strongest allies of the capitalist west. The intermediate class subordinated both the polar classes, that is, the private elite who were large scale owners of property and the peasantry and working classes, to the government, and tailored all their policies according to the capitalist ideology.

Since, the class structure of a peripheral society is different from the metropolitan formations; the intermediate class cemented their hegemony over the proletariat, the peasantry. The intermediate class ceaselessly tried and still tries to dominate the propertied classes as well. Marx and Engels called this class the 'governing caste' (the bureaucracy, etc) which made the state the loci of establishing the capitalist mode. They made the peripheral state into a highly interventionist state which functioned like a large capitalist firm. The peripheral state controlled all networks of employment in public sector and also controlled every facet of economic reform in every other sector. In this way, it allowed the imperial forces of the metropolitan centers to dominate, by collaborating with it in every possible way, using military might fairly regularly to intimidate the masses if required.

Finally, referring to Globalization, Ahmed says that globalization talks about transnational movement of capital, and about free market. It also talks about bringing marginalized groups to the center and talks about a global culture and global identity in a hyper differentiated field where equal opportunities of self-expression and consumption would be available to all the people without any difficulty.

Ahmed calls all this pretence. He says that capital, ever since its inception, has always been transnational. During the British Raj, capital moved freely as India was their colony. Even today, capital moves freely. American capital, for instance can arrive at Bangalore, easily while the marginalized Indian labour cannot move freely to the metropolitan centers. He says, free capital movement is possible, because the Indian

intermediate class and the elite propertied class are allies of the metropolitan centers. Although the Indian nation state is sovereign, yet the metropolitan centers are powerful enough to use their allies in this so called sovereign state and manipulate them to their advantage. Their institutions like World Bank, IMF, etc. reduce nation-states of the third world countries to non-entities. These institutions define national policies across the third-world and use the power of communication, technology, finance and speculation to make the already groveling power-bloc of the third-world countries to realize, that after the collapse of Soviet Union, there is not alternative to the only available system – the system of imperial capital. So the power-bloc of the third-world countries, which has already been reduced to a position of desperate dependence on the imperialist metropolitan centers, feels compelled to create conditions which are favorable to these centers. The power bloc bends backwards to guarantee repatriation of profits to them by structuralizing labour laws, wage contracts, conditions of industrial peace to suit their masters. All this is carried on in the name of restructuring industrial policy under the slogan of ‘free market’ or ‘globalization’. Ahmed questions that if the bourgeoisie of the metropolitan centers and their agents are true to the spirit that the ‘free-market will decide prices and values’, then the metropolitan and indigenous intellectuals and enthusiasts of globalization should abolish passports, so that there is free movement of labor like that of capital. Let all the capital of the west be invested in third world countries and let the labor of these countries be allowed to go to any country of their choice in the west, to earn their wages.

This, Ahmed says, would never happen, and the nation-state would continue to articulate all the terms of the imperialist power-bloc, in the negotiations between global capital and national level. It means that “prices, especially of labour are determined historically, and the nationally constituted disciplines and regimes of labour are a fundamental component of that history” (416). So, globalization is not universalizing labour or helping the marginalized to move to the center. Rather, it is based on differentiations and coercions (of the working class of the third world), which are more subtle now than during the era of colonization.

As far as a global culture is concerned, Ahmed says, it is the western culture which is dominating. Antonio Gramsci, calls it

'cultural domination hegemony.' Shifts in cultural realms are unprecedented, and despite massive disparities in realms of economy, the western, (presently, American) cultural artifacts are flooding the third world markets, in the form of entertainment, consumption of goods etc. The imperial nations want the imperialized third-world countries to 'respect the requirements of their identity' (418) unquestioningly. Our folk culture and traditional values are not important and western concepts of value, tastes, entertainment, et al reign supreme. This universalism of western culture in the name of hybridity, alternate, multiple identities, creates identity crises at the local level. For instance, the hegemony of upper-classes over the lower, becomes weak once again as it happened during the days of colonialism. The dominance of western values, leads to rise in fundamentalism which is born out of weakening hegemonic control in local communities. The onslaught of global culture, therefore, leads to revival of religious fundamentalism as in the earlier times (colonial era), with cries of 'religion and culture' in danger, once again rending the air. All this is an inter play of hegemonies, new and old, whose only focus is to obfuscate the prevailing 'specificities'. So, Ahmed reasserts strongly, globalization is the very acme of imperialism. It talks about eradication of poverty and institutionalization of equality. But, in reality, it leads to more economic disparities. It practises remorseless differentialism and

celebration of the hardened boundaries between self and other. It denounces universalism of enlightenment, rationalism, etc while also fully participating in the globalization of consumption patterns and packaging of identities as so many exhibits. At the same time, and often from the same people, we also have the propagation of the idea of infinite hybridity, migrancy, multiple identities as if cultures had no real historical density and identities could be simply made up, *sui generis*, out of the global traffic and malleability of elements taken from all over the world. (418)

Earlier, the nation became a restrictive entity. Today the trans-national has a semantics which is equally restrictive, although it projects itself as a harbinger of new possibilities with its "bland, apolitical universalism" or at times a humanism which overrides differences. As a result, its capacity of playing a meaningful role in the lives of people is severely limited. Therefore, this globalization is nothing but imperialism which like the proverbial chameleon changes colors to

suit itself, but does not vanish into thin air. It has “deep veins” and is not just a ‘story to pass over’.

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# The 'Eternal Verities' of William Faulkner

Ginny Kang

The ringing optimism of William Faulkner's Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech condensed in the phrase "Man will not merely endure: He will prevail" (205) and its applicability to his novels has been the subject of continuing controversy and challenge. How could such a positive affirmation of belief be squared with a fictional cannon that has featured human records of defeat as those of Joe Christmas, Quentin Compson and Thomas Sutpen? How could the privation of life and loss of honour that we see in *The Sound and the Fury*, *Light In August* and *Absalom, Absalom!* come from the same artist who summoned up such high-minded qualities as, "love and honour and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice?" (205).

Yet what the artist achieved at Stockholm was the image as our century's pre-eminent interpreter of the Tragic Man, his folly and above all his glory – an inspired illustrator and celebrant of man's basic qualities. The amazing fact remains that Faulkner who has described so powerfully the ugly, obscene and irrational world of man should have meant all along that he was upholding the 'eternal verities' and had therefore been without doubt on the side of the angels. The rhetoric of the Noble Prize Address only articulated directly the complex truths of the human heart which seems to some readers in a tenuous and ambiguous state of suspension in his novels. The picture of the modern Adam that emerges from Faulkner's works seems to be part of the epic image of man formed by protagonists like Stephan Dedalus and Leopold Bloom in Joyce's *Ulysses* and the unnamed hero in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. But a close reading of Faulkner's fiction would however reveal that his vision of hope for human life rests on his understanding of the unconscious self as a powerful and dynamic source of life, wholeness and essential values. Elaborating on his view about Mankind, Faulkner said:

He is immortal not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and endurance. (206).

Through an awareness of his deepest self, man can experience a

sense of oneness with the natural flow of life and can recapture the sacred dimension of a human being. In other words, he supported the idea of moral growth through suffering, the availability of human choices and individual responsibility.

Out of the conflict between the forces of life and anti-life, Faulkner has forged an individualized concept of faith by abandoning the rationalistic – empiric frame of reference and the uncompromising standard of the idealist. Faulkner's novels are representations of the modern consciousness struggling to emerge from the uncertainties of this state and act significantly in defiance of time and death.

It is not easy to recognize the constructive values with which Faulkner's image of man is imbibed. The emphasis that the critics have placed upon Faulkner's morbidity and disillusionment enforces the reader to raise the legitimate questions – whether the author has failed on ethical and aesthetic grounds? What belief, if any, does Faulkner actually express? Though Faulkner was easily labeled as a nihilist, fatalist, pessimist and so on by the critics, it is difficult to find a specific term for an artist who believed in the necessity of faith but rejected the absolutes of rigid theology, who believed in God but denied churches, dogma and orthodoxy, who believed in the possibility of social improvement but disliked utopias. It is in the final book, *The Reivers* that Faulkner says what he had believed all the while:

A gentlemen can live through anything... accepts the responsibility of his actions and bears the burden of their consequences, even when he did not himself instigate them, but only acquiesced to them, didn't say No though he knew he should (282).

This is not essentially different from what Byron Bunch in *Light In August*, written thirty years earlier aptly said, "It seems like a man can just about bear anything. He can even bear what he never done" (164). The strength of the ethical vision is its consistency, its pervasive force in many kinds of situations and all conditions of men.

Faulkner's fiction presents two opposing attitudes towards life: man may either accept life as he finds it, endure its imperfections and determine to survive it or reject life as it is and devote himself to an idealized vision of life. The novels reveal generations of Compsons,

Sutpens, Sartoris repeating themselves and the sins of their fathers being perpetuated not because an authoritarian God curses the family with a particular sin but because man refuses to accept the past and learn from it. For Faulkner, time is a "fluid condition... there is no such thing as was, only is" (255). Characters like Bayard Sartoris, Quentin Compson, Rosa Coldfield struggle to stop time's flow, to prevent it from defiling their ideal past; a strong attraction to Keatsian stasis. But they lose their potentialities for adjustment, integration and completion as the design assumes an overwhelming influence. In one of his interviews in Japan, Faulkner had stressed the fact that time has "got to go forward and we have take along with us all the rubbish of our mistakes and our errors". (121).

We are seldom permitted to enter Faulkner's world chronologically – the reason for the dislocation of time being, that all time included in his books is brought in the present. Sartre, noticing that Faulkner appears to "arrest the motion at the very heart of things" arrives at the conclusion that he decapitates time "takes away its future, that is to say that the dimension of free choice and act" (230). But Faulkner's understanding of time represents simply a refusal to divide time into mutually exclusive units and an insistence that the past and the future are immanent in the present. Agreeing with Bergson's theory of fluidity of time, he says there is "only the present moment in which I include both the past and the future and that is eternity". (72) In order to collect the fragments of modern life, Faulkner dips into an even larger reality, the past, because as he puts it "yesterday, today and tomorrow are Is: Indivisible One" (192).

What is the victimizing force in William Faulkner? Can it be defined as Destiny or Evil? While discussing human fate, Faulkner declared that man is a victim of himself and later in his address at Massachusetts spoke of man's "heritage and free will and decision" (129). Nowhere does he imply that because South has sinned, because our fathers have sinned, man is no longer free to work out his destiny. Though Mr. Compson excuses all human failures, including his own by attributing them to fate, the 'stage manager', it is a pathetically absurd attempt to invent alibis and to evade responsibility. Undoubtedly, a tension exists between man's free will and the countless forces that thwart its existence. It becomes difficult to explain the unwarranted tragedy that befalls Judith Sutpen or even the plight of Caddy Compson

who is victimized by a variety of interpenetrative circumstances. But Faulkner has gone to elaborate lengths to show that the innocents are victims of men, not of the cosmos. In his novels, we find some very convincing and pathetic portraits – Joe Christmas, Charles Bon, Thomas Sutpen – preys of insufferable inner furies, men driven by self-destructive impulses. They are rootless, alienated creatures hopelessly entangled in some inner morass in which they are doomed to perish. Faulkner's is undoubtedly a world where man exists as a crushed being – but the pressure comes from within, not without. Faulkner's man crushes himself more than he is crushed. They have the power of many choices and are capable of self-determination. The 'inner fatality' can be explained as the poverty of positive forces in these individuals – their supreme flaw is the rejection of positive values of pity, compassion and forgiveness.

Faulkner's sympathies do not lie with organized religion that derives its strength from coercive reasoning. The dogmas and the doctrines suppress the individuality of man and dry up within him the springs of feeling. If Faulkner believes in God, it is in God that resides in some way in the heart of man. At Nagano he stated, "Well, I believe in God. Sometimes Christianity gets pretty debased, but I do believe in God. Yes." (23-24) and the religion that he endorses is a direct personal one. Faulkner is unable to systemize in any way the faith, which he advocates, but we can glean a fairly consistent view of his 'belief'. There are indeed churches in the Yoknapatawpha country but unfortunately someone has removed the bells from the steeples. Adherents of formal religious denominations are often revealed by Faulkner as practitioners of rigid and artificial strictures, of no true ethical substance. Through Doc Hines, McEachern and Hightower, Faulkner criticizes with penetrating irony the religion which shifts the responsibility of human action from man to God and consequently sinks man into an abyss of moral and social responsibility. The humanity of such people is often distorted, as they frequently combine religious beliefs with compulsive social prescriptions that lead them to perform acts of violent and destructive fanaticism.

Seldom in Faulkner's work do we find a mature recognition of fulfilled love between man and woman. The writer does not identify love with romantic courtship and illicit sexual activity. To him the greatest love is not based upon sensation but upon spiritual affinity

between man and nature, between man and his fellow beings and among members of a family. The importance of love in a family is well acknowledged by Faulkner in the most complimentary and most significant dedication of *Go Down Moses*.

To Mammy

Caroline Barr

Mississippi (1840 – 1940)

who was born in slavery and who gave to my family a fidelity without stint or calculation of recompense and to my childhood an immeasurable devotion and love(2).

It is in motherhood that Faulkner captures the quality of life that characterizes the whole person- symbolic of the human capacity for caring, for protecting, for treasuring, for loving life. One idea to which Faulkner may be said to adhere to consistently is that without love no one can ever be a human being. With Faulkner the opposite of love is not hate: it is doom, the fate of any man or woman who ignoring love pursues selfish ends. As Lawrence Edward Bowling says, "In Faulkner's writings the lovers are never losers, and the non-lovers are always losers even when they win". (117)

The 'verities' that William Faulkner repeatedly cited imply the need for self-transcendence: 'a still point'. But to Faulkner, redemption and salvation of the sinful man comes from guilt acknowledged and suffering accepted, not through divine grace. Throwing oblique light on the same point, he publicly said:

It is not man in the mass who can and will save man. It is Man himself created in the image of God, so that he will have the power and the will to chose right from wrong and so be able to save himself. (157).

Direct encounters with nature, birth, initiation, creativity and death become sacred experiences, revealing inwardly the essential values of human events. Endurance equals stasis and acceptance of what life brings, an abiding by and being in harmony with the elemental life process and the unfolding of human events. It also means recognition of man's imperfect nature and life's imperfection, without desire for perfection, simply a desire to life live. In Faulkner the Messiah does

come, though not as an external entity.

The ethical choices with which Faulkner presents his characters are not essentially Christian but spiritual ones – the choice between justice and injustice, courage and cowardice, sacrifice and greed, pity and self. Both Quentin Compson and Dilsey live in the same traumatic world, sharing the same objective reality. Dilsey is not a stranger to the facts of Quentin's experience but she does not participate in his responses. For Quentin, Christ is an inanimate doll with "sawdust flowing from what wound in what side that not for me died not"(127) while Dilsey cries quietly in the memory of the "blood of the remembered Lamb"(264). Here we find true belief transcending analysis and scepticism. To acknowledge one's guilt and suffer voluntarily is the beginning of the recognition of one's moral strength.

It is Faulkner's conception of a redemptive faith that he has discovered through a dialectic and progressive consideration of creative and destructive forces. For Faulkner's final vision is one of hope: man sinful but striving for good, man shackled by bonds but aspiring to be free. At the University of Virginia, he continued to reiterate his theme, his faith in Man: "What we need are people who will say, this is bad and I am going to do something about it. I am going to change it."

The notion that Faulkner's ethical vision is an outright rejection of modernism contains a measure of truth but it is sometimes too rigidly applied to the fiction and it attributes to Faulkner an interpretation of history he may not have had. In so far as modernism implies exploiting nature and establishing human relationships that are mediated through power and ideology, it appears as an obstacle to human fulfillment. But this account tends to allegorize Faulkner's works inflexibly as a conflict between traditionalism and modernism, to find 'good' characters affirming a humane ethic in their dealing with others, and to find 'bad' characters asserting freedom from moral restraints. He has sometimes been accused of being a Southern romanticist glorifying the virtues of an antebellum aristocracy by an exaggerated contrast with the present day degenerate society. But it is impossible to classify Faulkner's people as belonging either to the 'Sartoris' or the 'Snopes' world. Faulkner's fiction is indeed too diverse, too multidimensional to be reduced to any simplistic formulas or convenient categories but it possesses its

own coherence, its own consistency. As Faulkner himself said, "The whole output or sum of an artists work is to have a design"(255).

Faulkner was painfully aware of how inaccurate is vision, how distorted is perspective, how subjective is experience. Consequently he does not allow even the most astute narrators to grasp all the truth around them. Their fragmented understandings must be synthesized in the reader's mind that creates the fourteenth image. Nevertheless Edmonds McCaslin in *Go Down Moses* tries to define the Faulknerian truth:

Truth is one. It doesn't change. It covers all things, which touch the heart - honour and pride and justice and courage and love... They all touch the heart, and what the heart holds to becomes truth, as far as we know truth... (297)

Truth and goodness emerge from the highest and the most crucial moment of their engagement with humanity. And when Faulkner spoke of man's virtues, he was not eulogizing the lost perfection of a golden age, he was pointing more closely to what persists and prevails in those who do not forget, what he called the 'truths' of the heart. What all this adds up to is what Faulkner finds in life a recurrent flowing forth of meaningful possibility and thereby showing the process of life seeking the conditions of salvation. Moral maturity in Faulkner's moving world does not consist in any particular achievement but rather in the acceptance of the necessity to keep moving. In motion, in refusal of stasis and despair are discovered the source of a vitality that both causes all the grief and anguish and affords a continuing hope of overcoming them. Man prevails and attains peace of mind through suffering and involvement:

To try something you can't do, because it's too much, but still to try it and fail, and then try it again. That to me is success. (3)

To Faulkner prevalence does not only mean man's continuity as a species but his developing a higher consciousness which enables him to see beyond damnation and death. And the assertion of the 'verities' affirms the human spirit and forever provides an image of man's capacity to be triumphant and immortal which has the ability and power to convert even darkness into a pattern of meaningful and soothing symmetry. Faulkner holds no contempt for reason but deplors man-

restricting reason to the analysis of finite entities, when his mental powers are capable of comprehending realities, which transcend the finite. Replying to a question at the University of Virginia, "Whether the man's best hope to prevail and endure lay within the mind or the heart", he replied, "I don't have much confidence in the mind.... It let's you down sooner or later. You have to feel". (136).

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# Space as Metaphor in the Third World Cinema: Reading Manijeh Hekmat's *Women's Prison*

Vivek Sachdeva

Often it is believed that most of the 'modern ideas' have originated in the West, something that also lends legitimacy to the notion of Eurocentric supremacy and hegemony. No wonder, the roots of the movement(s) for the struggle and empowerment of women, in the First or the Third World, are invariably traced back to the West. In this paper, I shall also try to reconstruct the history of struggle of the Iranian women for the articulation of their rights in the cinematic language. My argument is that Iranian women are doubly marginalized as the Third World, to which they essentially belong, is already marginalised in the politically structured world.

This paper is divided into two parts. In the first part, I problematize the position of the Third World countries vis-à-vis the First World, and in the second part, I offer a sustained critique of an Iranian film that deals with women-related issues. My effort is to see how in this cinematic narrative, 'space' becomes a potent metaphor for articulating the problems of women in the Third World societies.

## Part I

In the political world order, the term 'Third World' came into circulation after the Second World War. The Bandung Conference held in 1955 is considered to be the moment of its "immaculate birth [...]" None of the senses in which the term 'Third World' is now used- non-alignment, a global space other than capitalism and socialism, the tri-continent- would apply to this event" (Ahmad 1992: 293-94). Modelled on the concept of the French Third Estate, Alfred Sauvy claimed that he had already coined this term in 1952. Originally the term 'Third World' was used to distinguish nations that aligned with neither the West or with the East during the Cold War, including many members of the Non-Aligned Movement. Today, however, the term is frequently used to denote nations with a low Human Development Index (HDI), independent of their political status.

Various thinkers like Gayatri Spivak, Kumkum Sangari, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Cheryl Johnson-Odim and others have tried to define

the term Third World in their own distinctive ways. However, there is no objective definition of Third World or Third World country and the use of the term remains controversial. But the definition given by Cheryl Johnson-Odim that the term Third World is frequently applied in two ways: to refer to underdeveloped/overexploited geopolitical entities, i.e. countries, regions, even continents; and to refer to the oppressed nationalities from these areas that are now residing in the 'developed' First World countries not only blurs the geographical boundaries ascribed to the Third World as has been done by various political thinkers, including Chandra Mohanty, but also suggests that the Third World exists in social, economic and political functioning of a country more than it does in the terms of political boundaries. Though the term 'Third World' lost its literal meaning after the collapse of the Socialist second world, the world having been reduced to a uni-polar power structure; yet it continues to be equally vibrant and meaningful phenomena because of its economic, political and cultural reasons.

It is a matter of irony that the condition of women is more deplorable in the Third World societies that should have been able to understand the pain of exploitation and marginalization. Within the context of third-world countries, the term Third World Women has already been a subject of much discussion and debate. To my understanding, labelling women of the third-world as third-world women reduces them to the status of the 'other' within in 'other' society and is exclusionary in nature. Trinh T. Minh's position that the moment we drop the phrase 'Third World,' the sentence immediately unveils its value-loaded clichés while answering the question "why do we have to be concerned with the question of Third World women?" After all, it is only one issue among many others," touches all the sensitive questions and issues that every feminist worth her salt, regardless of her race and colour, must address. Let me say that women in the Third World countries like ours have always been 'under-privileged' and have had to struggle relentlessly to move from the periphery to the 'centre.' It is a fact that the question of a woman's identity is closely linked to problem of contraction or expansion of space within which she is located. This gives me reason enough to discuss this women-oriented cinematic narrative as a clear example of the Third World Cinema as films are as potent a medium as literature as far as the portrayal of the social, material or historical realities is concerned.

The Third World narratives were never considered worthy of being made a part of the Western canon. Even a liberal humanist like F. R. Leavis chose to exclude such narratives from the ambit of his idea of 'The Great Tradition.' So strong has been the prejudice of the West against the Third World that it has never bothered to look at the history and development of thoughts there. The West continues to strengthen its self-created myth that generation of ideas and knowledge takes place in the West only. The First World canon has always excluded the "unmodern Third World texts" (Jameson 1986: 66) by not considering them fit for literary and/or critical practices. This intellectual hegemony of the West is nothing but continuation of its imperialist domination.

The tendency of the West to exclude the literature of the Third World from the critical practice doesn't imply that the literature of the Third World is not worth studying. In the last few decades, the questions of world literature have started asserting themselves, largely due to the shift in thinking which calls for giving centrality to the marginalised segments/nations and also their literatures. It is noteworthy that some of the Third World countries have given this 'modern world' some of its most ancient civilisations, with their long history of rich heritage and culture. In the present paper, I shall also make an attempt to reconstruct the history of women's movement in Iran from the position of a third world citizen.

My reasons for taking up an Iranian film are many. One, this cinematic narrative belongs to one such Third World country that has had a long tradition of poetry and painting, art and architecture behind it. Two, though the Third World context is the same, each country has its own history, sociology and politics of women's empowerment. Though the Iranian society is largely Islamic and so quite conservative and closed as far as the position of women is concerned, women have shown tremendous courage and conviction in its struggle for their emancipation, which deserves to be placed on record. Three, I also propose to study how 'cinematic space' in this film is used as a potent metaphor for expressing a very complex nature of women's position and status in the Iranian society and culture.

I shall begin my analysis with a brief account of women's movement in Iran. The struggle of women in Iran surprisingly goes back in the middle of the nineteenth century. The first major figure who spearheaded the campaign was Fatima. Born in Ghazvin in 1814,

Fatima and her sister “Marzieh received religious training and became masters in Persian literature, Arabic and Islamic studies” (Price). Fatima was married off at the age of 14 to her cousin, the son of Mulla Mohammed Taghi Borghani, a famous and orthodox Usuli religious leader who was against other schools of thoughts like Ahkbari and Sheykhi which demanded reforms and also challenged the authority of Mujtahids; when the latter demanded reforms, Fatima and her sisters took the side of Sheykhi. Fatima went to Iraq for her further studies.

Her actions alienated her family; she left her husband started lecturing and openly supported the Babi movement. Amongst many changes demanded by the Babis, emancipation of women became an issue. Though her actions were predominantly religious her presence often without a veil in public debates created a stir even amongst the Babis and she often was forced to leave and move to another city. Her very strong presence in the movement initiated the formation of the first well-organized women’s league in Iran. (Price)

Fatima was captured in Tehran and along with other Babi leaders and executed in 1852.

It is important to note here that Fatima, while struggling for women’s rights in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Islamic society, dared discard her veil. To my mind, her attempt to cast off the veil is as powerful and culturally loaded act as ‘bra burning’ in the France of 1960s. When European women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were still trapped within, in Elaine Showalter’s words, the ‘feminine phase,’ Fatima’s action can be seen as an act that is indicative of the ‘female phase’ in which women’s “dependency on opposition is replaced by a rediscovery of women’s”(Guerin 199) self. Her act of casting off the veil in public was a sign of defying the authority of men over women and an attempt at self-expression. Fatima was regularly conducting meetings in different places. Soon, she was known as Tahireh which means ‘pure.’ In 1848, Babis were executed and Tahireh in a meeting tears off her veil for which Tahireh was arrested and exiled. The mass execution of Babi women and children shocked the Iranian society, especially the upper class and the educated women. The lesson was learnt and the struggle for women’s rights spread all across the country.

What is more commendable is the understanding of issues and problem of women displayed by various leaders of the movement from

time to time. For example,

Taj Saltaneh, Naser al-Din Shah's daughter in her famous memoirs criticized the stagnation of the political and social institutions in Iran without rejecting Monarchy. She mentions the pitiful state of women in Iran, criticizes the notion of veiling and how it has stopped women from advancing [...] Bibi Khanoum Astarabadi in her pamphlet *The Shortcomings of Men* strongly criticized the derogatory popular book *Educating Women* and concluded that the writer's understanding of keeping women in their place implies the total subjugation of women. (Price 2005)

By 1913, there were nine women's societies and sixty-three girls' schools in Tehran with about 2500 students. The schools produced the first generation of well-educated and prominent women. Among them the most famous ones are Touran Azmoudeh, Fakhre Ozma Arghon (Simin Behbahani's mother), Bibi Khalvati, Guilan Khanoum, Farkhondeh Khanoum and Mehrangize Samiei. They were also joined by their male supporters. Javad Sartip, Mirza Hussein Rushdiyyeh, Nasr Douleh and Adib Douleh are amongst the best known supporters whose moral and financial support made the movement possible. By this time, women's associations also began to flourish. 'Society for the Freedom of Women and Secret Union of Women' was formed in 1907. 'Association of the Ladies of the Homeland' was followed by 'The Society for the Welfare of Iranian Women,' 'Women of Iran', 'Union of Women', 'Women's Efforts,' and the 'Council of Women of the Center' are some of the famous organizations. They all played an active part in politics, organized plays, raised funds for schools, hospitals and orphanages. In 1915, the 'Society of Christian Women Graduates of Iran' was formed which was followed by 'Zoroastrian and Jewish Women's Association.' They started organizing, helping and educating women and children in their own communities.

Though, after the revolution of 1978, women in Iran started losing the battle they had begun to win, yet they continued to struggle against the social, political and cultural system that always imposed inhibitions on them and denied them the space required to grow as free individuals and discover their inner womanly 'self'. It is in this context that the film Manijeh Hekmat's *Women's Prison* (made by a woman filmmaker) has to be seen not so much as a story of an individual, but tends to become, in Frederick Jameson's phrase, the "national allegory" of

women's struggle in Iran. In the film, the microcosmic space of prison transcends the boundaries of space and becomes a metaphor of women's condition and struggle in Iran.

## Part II

Space in cinema refers to the spatial relations between the characters and the objects shown on the screen. In classical narrative cinema "space and time are coherently represented to achieve the reality effect (Hayward 2004: 343). The avant-garde film-makers have disrupted the spatial and temporal continuity, because of ideological and aesthetic reasons. Thus, treatment of space and time become two very important aspects of cinematic narration. The narrative under study cannot be termed as "spatial narrative, not in the sense in which the term is understood by Joseph Frank. This narrative overtly states the time during which the action takes place and also the period during which the narrative unrolls the events. Space in this film can be seen at two levels-one, the narrative space-where the action is taking place and second, the cinematic space-the relation between the actors and the space of the screen.

The microcosm of the prison in Manijeh Hekmat's *Women's Prison* (2002) represents the domain of the women's struggle where they fight for their survival, dignity and rights. Among other things, the prison is symbolic of the patriarchal state's dominance, as it could be interpreted both literally and symbolically.

Manijeh Hekmat's *Women's Prison* (2002) was banned in Iran for more than a year but later it became available for viewing. 'Prison' has always served as a handy metaphor for society and life in general, especially when the governments ban such films that tend to portray or expose dark, bleak reality of society. It is obvious that such metaphors converge on reality reinforcing this fact that an undemocratic system often puts restrictions on what the masses can possibly view. Located between 1984 and 2001 in a women's prison, it depicts with jagged realism (often employed by the Italian neo-realist filmmakers, who even went to the extent of shooting a film in an actual prison), the love/hate relationship between inmate Mitra (Roya Nonahali), who is serving a term for murdering an abusive stepfather, and the warden Yousefi Tahereh (Roya Taymourian). The film touches highly sensitive issues of Iranian society such as crime, corruption, prostitution, drug-addiction and homosexuality. A compelling sociological portrait, it also satisfies

the conventions of the prison film genre (Simon 2006). Time span of 17 years divided into three parts - 1984, 1992 and 2001 portrays condition of women in post-revolution Iranian society and the struggle they have displayed both outside and inside the prison. In all the three segments, Mitra has three young companions. All the three companions belong to different strata of Iranian society. Though there is hardly any difference in their condition, as all of them are victims of patriarchal Iranian society, yet the film hints at the change in the attitude of women as the time progresses.

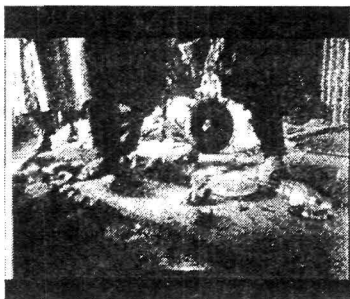
Before 1983, the prison is in a filthy condition, with prisoners openly showing insolence to the warden. A new warden named Yousefi Tahereh, presumably chosen mainly because of commitment to revolution, takes charge. Although harsh in her demeanour, she proceeds to clean up the messy conditions and insists that the prisoners must show respect to the wardens. She sends the outspoken prisoner and her cohorts to solitary confinement so that the rest are forced to endure snowy conditions outdoors, while the cells are cleaned and cleared of illegal stuff. In order to humble Mitra, the warden repeatedly sends her to solitary confinement. She even gets Mitra's head shaved off on one occasion, all because she protests against inhumane treatment given not just to her but also to her fellow prisoners. However, Mitra brings far more order to the overcrowded prison by first helping someone deliver a baby (later named Sepideh), then defending a virgin prisoner and much later asking the warden to return the cap of fellow prisoner Sepideh. Gradually, the warden comes to believe that Mitra was justified in killing her father, who was brutalizing the family, and in the end, Mitra is released. The film unveils many dark facts about the Iranian society in general and judicial system in particular.

One is that political prisoners, after the revolution, were kept among the prostitutes;

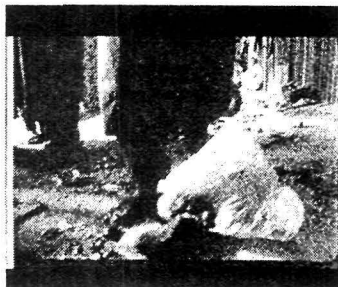
two, the Iranian revolution has not reduced the population of incarcerated prostitutes, which swell in number as the film progresses; three, Mitra's inability to post bail means that she must wait several years for the courts to release her after she appeals; four, the prisoners do a fine job of organizing their own society and are only alienated when the warden intervenes with stern punishment; five, the women are not the dregs of society;

they are merely unfortunate and in some cases quite clever; six, children born in prison return to prison for lack of alternative social institutions to care for them (PFS 2005).

What is important to observe here is that women have been portrayed as brave and so is their struggle in the face of grim and hostile social and political realities. The film opens with a monochromatic synecdoche shot showing feet of women walking in filth and waste and clamour of the inmates is heard on the sound track.



Frame 1



Frame 2

The new warden wants to introduce order and discipline in the prison. Following Islamic dress code, she is always in full black and represents the establishment of the post-revolution Iran. Hence, begins an antagonism between the women prisoners and the warden. When new warden enters the ward to see the state of affairs there for herself, she finds that the corridor is not fit for human beings. In order to set things in order, she uses her dictatorial ways in getting her policies implemented in the prison. On a number of occasions, she makes her intentions of implementing her policies with an iron hand very clear to the prisoners. She wants inmates to display good conduct and be in full *hejab*- the veil. Her success in introducing 'order' in the prison is emphasised by a perfectly clean ward, immediately after Mitra is sent to solitary cell. She also gets all the inmates to cover their heads; take their food and medicines peacefully and forces them to exercise regularly. Before she came to the prison, they were all shown moving around with bare heads, smoking and defying the warden.

The warden, a representative of the establishment, who deceives and lies to the inmates, makes up her mind to break Mitra's spirit, though she is convinced of the latter's righteousness, and that of other



women prisoner. She even rebukes Mitra when she helps in delivering the baby, describing it an illegal activity. The warden also threatens and intimidates inmates. In the power relation between the warden and the women inmates, Mitra emerges as a natural leader and representative of all the women prisoners. When Mitra is released from the prison, she gets a ceremonious farewell from her fellow inmates. The conflict is too obvious to be elucidated.

In the battle, the warden doesn't allow Mitra to attend the funeral of her mother, nor does she allow her to attend the 7<sup>th</sup> or the 40<sup>th</sup> day of ritualistically remembering her.

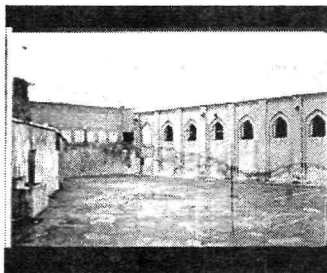
When Mitra is put in a solitary cell, she is shown with a shaven head sitting in the window, looking out of it. Her shaven head symbolises the humiliation she has suffered as a victim, inflicted by the warden. When she is shown sitting in the arch of the window, she sits in the frame of the window within the frame of the shot, re-emphasising her state of confinement. (Frame 3 and 4). The shot is followed by another shot, taken from outside, showing number of similar arch-windows of the prison (Frame 5), emphasizing the magnitude of her solitariness and strength of the prison (the system) in which there are many women like Mitra.



Frame 3



Frame 4



Frame 5

Finally, when Mitra comes out of jail, she goes about with a sense of achievement, as she has struggled and finally won her battle by convincing the warden that she had reasons for patricide and also that her activism is for the rights of other women in the prison. When Mitra is released from the prison, the warden herself accompanies Mitra to the gate of the prison to bid her good bye. Camera, at this moment, is positioned inside the prison, and we can see only Mitra's back. Yet again, the point of view of the world inside the walls of the prison, which can be seen as the point of view of all the inmates as well, is emphasised and the outer world is also seen from the same position. The narrative purports to show the reality of the world of women from their spatial and ideological position. It is this closed space where they play, laugh, cook, cry, play mothers to their children, learn skills to live respectfully, but when they go out, they suffer, struggle, in fact, 'live'. Thus, the limited and closed space of prison or over-crowded cells is a very potent and effective metaphor for the 'space' conceded to women in Iranian society.

Further, this film is narrated and focalized by what is called an omniscient narrator or Filmic Composition Device (F 4.2.) in cinema. Since in cinema, it is largely the camera that tells us the story and the camera, being in the control of the director, shows us the perspective of the female director who is the auteur of the film. Ultimately, it is important to identify the gaze of the camera with the gaze of the auteur. To put it differently, this film negotiates the problem of women in Iranian society with a rare degree of sensitivity and compassion, even with a disarming sense of inwardness.

This narrative, as pointed out earlier, is spread over a period of roughly 20 years, and is so deeply rooted in the history and culture of its country and it "speak(s) from within the 'culture' and 'tradition' (Ahmad 1992: 09), that it is really difficult not to read it as a "national allegory. In the case of Manijeh Hekmat, the resistance she faced and the way she struggled while making and releasing the film, the distance between the reel and real is extremely less. The struggle of Mitra and her resistance to political and social dominance in reel life is analogous to the struggle that the filmmaker herself had to face in her real life. It is not the bodies of the women that are in prison; rather their spirits and in the case of a woman filmmaker, her creative spirit. The only space where women express themselves is a paradoxical space - the prison,

both literal and metaphorical. The prison continues to exist even in their domestic lives, though not directly portrayed in the film yet one can make out from the cases of the prisoners. Similarly, limited space is given to women in their professional lives or sometimes, they are not given enough 'space' to pursue their careers even. 'Space' in prison is analogous to their existential space they are given in their real lives. The veil or *hejab*, which is given to them by the patriarchal system, not only alienates them from the rest of the world but also makes them analogous to the colonised and subjugated ones. Removal of veil by Iranian women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was an attempt to break off all bondage, a step taken towards their liberation.

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## Manning's *Her Privates We*: Literature From The Great War

Harsimran Singh

"War makes rattling good history; but Peace is poor reading" (Thomas Hardy: 71). There is cold prudence in Spirit Sinister's support of Napoleon, '*Ce grand bucheron de l'Europe*', (Victor Hugo: 367) for the sheer reading pleasure that he would bequeath to posterity. Much is written to document the gruesome battles of the Great War, immortalised in the mute testimony of its countless war cemeteries and memorials. Unflagging academic interest continues to variously attribute its astounding 10 million dead and 21 million wounded, among other factors, to its 'total' nature or being caught by a 'hiatus in the mobile arm'. Nevertheless, its gory carnage is generally hidden beneath scant references to its bloody, pulverising quality, and its 'festival of mud and blood'. Perhaps, Churchill comes fairly close to documenting this unspeakable slaughter of 'the hardest, the cruellest, and the least-rewarded of all the wars' wherein

The wounded died between the lines: the dead mouldered into the soil....Cities and monuments were smashed by artillery. Bombs from the air were cast down indiscriminately. Poison gas in many forms stifled or seared the soldiers. Liquid fire was projected upon their bodies. Men fell from the air in flames, or were smothered, often slowly, in the dark recesses of the sea. The fighting strength of armies was limited only by the manhood of their countries. Europe and large parts of Asia and Africa became one vast battlefield, on which after years of struggle not armies but nations broke and ran. (Cited in Terraine: 185).

Indeed, the constraints of history impose their own order, limiting the description of war as 'experience'; and rightly, because experience is couched in personal emotions, while history is expected to emphasise impersonal facts; an emphasis that may sometimes render a campaign totally unrecognisable to a chagrined participant. For the experience of war, for 'the terrible pictures which lie behind the colourless phrases' of reportage (Virginia Woolf quoted in Hibberd: 45), we must turn to the realm of art that vividly presents the world of feelings and emotions to convey the individually sentient perspective on a chunk of military

history, and reveal the human face of battle. It is because of this authenticity, this 'direct transcription of plain, unvarnished fact, that we may, perhaps, find 'the most useful historical evidence' in verse or, for that matter, in literature as a whole.

One of the greatest works of literature to emerge from World War I forms the subject of this essay: *Her Privates We* by Private 19022 (Frederic Manning), a revised version of the limited, unexpurgated *The Middle Parts of Fortune*. The choice is based primarily on three factors: the book is a recognised war classic; it is a true to life account by a man who took part in the actual fighting; and the author brings to his work a poetic sensibility, enhancing the authenticity of the recorded experience on the Somme and Ancre fronts during the latter half of 1916.

Among T.E. Lawrence's favourites, this book, written by a recognised classical scholar and poet, has been hailed as one of the masterpieces of war literature. Edmund Blunden has called it a 'modern classic'. To Ernest Hemingway, Arnold Bennet, and EM Forster, it is 'the finest novel about the war'. Andrew Rutherford attributes its success to 'uniting art with authenticity, fictional sophistication with documentary and psychological realism, and imposing significant form on the large untidiness of life and death' (*Studies*: 99). Indeed, in its style and approach, it reflects the author's 'absorption in the principles and aesthetics of classical culture', a trait admired in him by Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, and T.E. Lawrence, who regarded him as their equal in range and depth of learning (Marwil: ix). Its strength, in effect, derives chiefly from its achievement both as 'fact and art', for although classified as a novel, it is equally an outstanding memoir; Bourne and his fellow 'Westshires' follow precisely the passage of the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the King's Shropshire Regiment while Manning was with them. But it is also, at the same time, more than a memoir because, having 'got inside the mind of the fighting man with the intuition of a great writer', Manning sought to 'faithfully' represent the 'real and true' nature of the phenomenon of war from the earthy perspective of the anonymous ranks. However, its greatest triumph is that it 'quietly addresses even more fundamental matters', as a close reading would reveal.

Having spent twenty years on reading and reflecting on classics, Manning concedes war as a 'peculiarly human activity', fought by men,

not beasts, war is "in the nature of things". But war, nevertheless, reduces men to 'nocturnal beasts of prey, hunting each other in packs'; because, on the anvil of war, as Manning explains with psychological insight, 'fear' is beaten and forged into 'a point of exquisite sensibility', making it 'indistinguishable from hate', and leaving room only for the 'instinct of the beast'.

Consequently, the bestial violence of war is unimaginable to man: you see 'men smashed, obliterated in sudden eruptions of earth, rent and strewn in bloody fragments'. Death, and not Life, is the greater Reality in the midst of such devastation; and death, like chastity, 'admits of no degree', for either 'a man is dead or not dead'; but, till he is dead, he moves from 'one bloody misery into another'; once dead, 'it' is simply 'finished', and he is 'all right'. Perhaps, it is because of this overpowering reality of death that Bourne, who is obviously Manning himself, is shown to die in the narrative, the only major departure from autobiography:

One sees men living, living as it were, desperately and then suddenly emptied of life. A man dies and stiffens into something like a wooden dummy....the unburied dead with whom one lived, Briton and Hun impartially confounded, festering, fly-blown corruption, the pasture of rats, blackening in the heat, swollen with distended bellies, or shrivelling away. (20)

This gossamer thread that ties Life with Death, reflectively informs the whole work almost like a *leit motif*. It underlies the after-action roll, when for a moment the general sense of loss would become focused on one individual name, and after that he, too, faded into the past. However, comrades like Martlow, persisted in the memory, and seemed poignantly 'to be only out of sight, behind the hut as it were. At times, Manning's expressiveness appears to circumscribe not war alone, but, philosophically, the transience of life, in general:

Unknown shadows, gone almost as quickly and as inconspicuously as bats into the dusk; and they would all go like that ultimately...migrants with no abiding place, whirled up on the wind of some irresistible impulse. What would be left of them soon would be no more than a little flitting memory in some twilight mind. (358)

The 'most tragic element' for the soldiers, however, is the Hardy-esque sense of being at the disposal of some 'inscrutable power, using them for its own ends, and utterly indifferent to them as individuals' (332). Once conscious of his plight, man views himself as "a footnote to reality" with "no trick of command over men"; or, in Read's words:

A cog in some great evil engine,  
Unwilling, but revolv'd tempestuously  
By unseen springs....(cited in Rutherford: 83)

Consequently, however much a man might rave, unfeeling War seemed beyond influence, and from among its 'myriad faces' could always turn towards him one, 'which was his own'. It is this mirror-like, 'extraordinary veracity in war' that strips man of every 'conventional covering', leaving him to 'face a fact as naked and inexorable as himself'. In order to escape Death's stifling grasp, every individual conscience also seemed to crave for the freedom that lies only in Peace; but the chief 'problem' of the soldiers concerned not Death or freedom so much as 'the affirmation of their own will in the face of death'; and curiously, as Manning represents with philosophical and intellectual insight, the solution to this problem is 'continuous, and could never be final', with both Death and Peace setting limits on either extreme. '*C'est le guerre*', therefore, seemed to be the only 'sane' attitude to war: to accept war as 'one of the blind forces of nature, which can neither be foreseen nor controlled....[and] which one can only endure'. Notwithstanding this attitude of surrender, war remained to Manning 'an incredible madness' that 'infects' the blood with its 'realities' of 'dirt, misery, and madness', while the men were mere spectators (Manning cited in Marwil: xii-xiii).

The veracity of war also appears to demolish accepted truths. The celebrated military trait of 'honour', which is simply 'an elaborate refinement' of the 'decent instincts' of the average man, could easily become a 'fugitive and a cloistered virtue', even for men of rank with military antecedents; although it may 'renew its lustre again in more costermonger times'. Nevertheless, be it a 'grace' for some, and a 'duty' for others, 'self-interest', was common to all:

Even in the actual ecstasy of battle, when a man's soul might be torn suddenly from its scabbard to flash in an instant's brightness,

it was absent not for long. (Manning *Privates*: 45-46)

For a fuller understanding of Manning's concept of 'self-interest', we must turn to his poetry which expresses an ancient paradox: the feeling of oneness, eventually extending to the enemy, that coexists with a sense of isolation, whereby each man ultimately fights for himself:

I am alone: even ranked with multitudes:

And they alone, each man.

So are we free.

For some few friends of me, some earth of mine,

Some shrines, some dreams I dream, some hopes that emerge  
From the rude stone of life vaguely...

...even this England which is mine

Whereof no man has seen the loveliness

As with mine eyes: and even too, my God

Whom none have known as I: for these I fight,

For mine own self, that thus in giving self

Prodigally, as a mere breath in the air,

I may possess myself....

Fight for your own dreams, you.

(Manning, 'Self-sufficiency' in Hibberd and Onions, *Poetry*: 138)

The redeeming feature of war's unendurable misery is that it brings in its wake an edifying sensitivity to the tragedies of mankind. Manning drives home this aspect in a moving passage which, in thought, is of a piece with much of the poetry of the period, wherein soldiers were often represented as 'modern Christs', and cemeteries as Calvaries

[The soldiers] marched out of the village, past the stone calvary at the end of it, and men who had known all the sins of the world lifted, to the agony of the figure on the cross, eyes that had probed and understood the mystery of suffering. (235)

The passage is equally a part of Manning's conscious design, recorded elsewhere, to exalt the common soldiers, in spite of all their failings, for their sufferings that seemed to perform a cathartic function, an 'emptying of oneself', causing, in turn, to make a man 'most intensely himself'.



The book draws enormous strength from Manning's understanding of human nature, coupled with his extraordinary powers of observation, analysis, and expression that together lend an air of psychological percipience to the work. The following is an example of the effect of weariness on the human psyche:

Under the talk it was easy enough to see the irresolution of weary men seeking in their difficulties some reasonable pretext for doing nothing....Like all tired men in similar conditions, they were glad to have their actions determined for them. (3-4)

From a psychological perspective, 'discipline', the bedrock of an army, is seen to exist somewhere between a 'minimum of self-will' and an 'external discipline'; but in moments of bitterness, 'duty' and 'honour' become to the men merely the pretext on which they were being deprived of their most elementary rights. Physical love, on the other hand, seemed to acquire a new prominence:

In the shuddering revulsion from death one turns instinctively to love as an act which seems to affirm the completeness of being....It pressed on men whenever they moved back again to the borders of civilised life, which is after all only the organisation of men's appetites, for food or for women, the two fundamental necessities of his nature. (90)

War also seemed to lend a mutual insight into the human psyche. Although a mystery to himself, a man is the proverbial open book to others simply because, while he sees in himself 'the perplexities and torment of the mental processes out of which action issues', the others see only the 'simple and indivisible act itself'. Equally, it seemed that, once in the front line, 'men lost a great deal of their individuality'; their characters and even their faces seemed to become more 'uniform' (335-336). Above all else, this description of the men before an attack is outstanding for its delicate introspective verity, characteristically expressing the aloneness and inherent mystery of man:

One had a vague feeling [before the attack] that one was going away, without any notion of returning....One felt every question as an interruption of some absorbing business of the mind.

And then, one by one, they realized that each must go alone, and that each of them already was alone with himself...while the world

became *unreal* and *empty*, and they moved in a *mystery*, where no help was. (385)

The book occupies an exalted place in war literature on account of Manning's facility of expression. Be it in his description of the natural landscape or of life in the trenches, the book achieves rare eloquence at several places.

This passage about the 'shudderings of tormented flesh', as the soldiers vainly attempt to catch a few hours sleep in the unearthly turmoil of the trenches, is unrivalled for its psychological authenticity, and analytical ease of expression:

The obscure disquiet passed fitfully from one to another, lips parted with the sound of a bubble bursting, teeth met grinding as the jaws worked...little whimperings which quickened into sobs, passed into long shuddering moans, or culminated in angry, half-articulate obscenities...[that were] merely reflex action, part of an unconscious physical process, through which the disorderly nerves sought to readjust themselves, or to perform belatedly some instinctive movement which an over-riding will had thwarted at its original inception...as though something diabolically evil probed curiously to find a quick sensitive nerve and wring from it a reluctant cry of pain. (10-11)

In the trenches, personal hygiene is easily the first casualty. Sketching with a few masterly strokes, Manning describes how they always seemed to achieve only the 'semblance', rather than the 'reality of cleanliness' (25). He is equally adept in depicting how with the rains, life became 'an unresting struggle against the encroaching mud' that threatened to engulf roads and trenches in 'liquid ruin'; it was as if the earth 'exuded mud' with the 'consistency of thin cream', which tended, if neglected, 'to become tidal' (334-335).

The attack itself is captured with a metaphorically virile authenticity. The upper air 'fluttered' with shells that streamed overhead, 'sighing, whining, and whimpering for blood'; the 'hurricane of shelling' increased terrifically, and 'in the thunder of its surf, as it broke over the German lines, all separate sounds were engulfed...in one continuous fury'. Everything was 'stark, bare and cold' as they 'crept within the skeleton ribs of earth', through the 'dripping mist' that moved slowly, 'touching them with spectral fingers as it passed'; it 'wavered and

trembled about them in little eddies, and earth, and life, and time, were as if they had never been' (386-393). Equally notable are the authenticity and the sense of immediacy in Bourne's emotional crescendo following the death of his comrade, Martlow, and his bayoneting of the German soldier 'under the ribs near the liver' (399).

In contrast to this grim depiction of war, there is lyrical beauty in Manning's description of the natural landscape, revealing a poetic sensibility. He captures memorably the sharp crescent of the moon 'floating like a boat', and the bough that 'threw a mesh of fine twigs over its silver' (286).

The narrative is also balanced, as it were, by a gentle and unobtrusive wit that lends the work an air of sophistication. Little Martlow has annexed the field glasses of two German officers, 'who being dead had no use for them' (67); Sergeant Major Corbett instructs and inspires his men for the work ahead: 'the business of killing as many superfluous Germans as possible' (265); the 'insuperable bar' to the conversation with a Scotsman is 'that it is impossible to persuade him that an Englishman speaks English' (340); French beer is enough to 'make any reasonable man pro-German' (345); while exploring the ruins, a native instinct got the better of a dog's 'recently acquired caution, and it disappeared out of history in hot pursuit of a cat' (328); set upon by myriads of hen-fleas of 'a lively and vindictive disposition', in contrast lice appear to be 'merely caressing in their attentions' (86). Manning's ability to create humorous images attains a special brilliance in his description of the adjutant's horsemanship:

When the grey [horse] he rode trotted, you saw plenty of daylight between his seat and the saddle; and the exaggerated action made it seem as if, instead of the horse carrying the adjutant, the adjutant was really propelling the horse. (177)

*Her Privates We* is, indubitably, a masterpiece of war literature, notable for its psychological realism, intellectual and philosophical insight and authenticity of expression in its portrayal of the human face of battle. Predominantly sombre and tragic in mood, it includes touches of the comic that provide both contrast and relief. Its tone is largely sad and philosophical, often cynical, but seldom bitter. Its simplicity and directness of view are astonishing for the rare depth of vision that it achieves, without ostentation, about the will-o-the-wisp

mysteries that lie beyond understanding. Perhaps, it is chiefly for this that Manning is still remembered, above all, for his 'aesthetic mysteriousness'; a quality that assures the book an abiding place in literature for its admirable success in probing with perceptive elegance the unfathomable inner self; for catching a glimpse, as it were, of that twilight zone where life and death appear to meet in a strange moment of truth. The concluding line of the book is apt and deeply philosophical in its sensitivity to this sense of the incomprehensible and the inexpressible:

They sat there silently: each man keeping his own secret. (453)

Indeed, the book leaves us 'with a sense of mystery about ourselves'; a mystery deep-tinged with sorrow, since, as Marwil suggests, it is sorrow, and not anger or pride that permeate Manning's view of our aloneness. Deliberately, the lingering image conveyed by the last line of the book is of the men 'nursing their own doom'; perhaps because the misery of war is only a magnification of the sorrow implicit in the mystery of living and dying itself, essentially alone.

At a deeper level, the book thus reflects Manning's sentiments about the existential sadness and aloneness of man expressed in his poetry:

But each man is alone in this multitude;  
We know not the world in which we move....  
Only we have our secret thoughts,  
Our sense floats out from us, delicately apprehensive,  
To the very fringes of our being,  
Where light drowns.

(*Poetry of the Great War* : 84)

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# Synchronous Communication in English

G. Damodar

Synchronous communication refers to real time communication, interaction with live audiences. Almeida d'Eça (2002) defines this chatting as “a two-way synchronous form of computer mediated communication (CMC), a dialogue in real time as we speak our words, an online conversation between two or more people by means of a computer.”<sup>21</sup> This definition touches upon most of the elements that describe the nature and characteristics of chatting. When devices exchange data, there is a flow or stream of information between the two. In any data transmission, the sender and receiver must have a way to extract individual characters or blocks (frames) of information.

An entirely different form of synchronous communications can be seen in the form of chat and instant messaging. Like a voice telephone call, a chat, skype, face-to-face talk or instant messaging session is live and each user responds to the other in real time. This means that all parties involved in the communication are present at the same time. This includes, but is not limited to, a telephone conversation (not texting), a company board meeting, a chat room event and instant messaging. We can get an immediate response; instant feedback fosters communication; there seems to be a more emotional bonding effect between people when there is a possibility to communicate in real time (synchronously), spontaneity. Some of the tools used for chatting include Skype (video, voice and text), Yahoo Messenger (text, video and voice), Chat function within an e-Learning platform, Breeze e-conference, powwow – unsuccessfully, Yahoo Messenger, LEARN chat room and ICQ (voice and text)

In contrast, e-mail messages, discussion boards, text messaging over cell phones, snail post, springdoo messages, blogs, forums, podcasts, videoblogs or vlogs are *asynchronous communications*. Some amount of time may pass before a person responds to a message. In a discussion forum, a message sits in a message queue for other people to read and respond to at any time, or until the message falls out of the queue. Asynchronous communication does not require that all parties involved in the communication to be present at the same time. In distance (specifically online) education asynchronous communication is the

major (sometimes the only) method of communication. Usually, we use different discussion boards in each class with each having its own purpose. There is less time to think about what you want to say or your response to another; time may be a limiting factor, e.g. time zones; synchronous communication over the computer may be difficult because of the speed of data transaction with slower connections; you need extra equipment (speakers, microphone, webcamera)

These two forms of communication, which are accessible to any internet user from just about any web-attached system, may be the most profound aspect of the internet. They promote a new form of instant global communication and collaboration. In the case of discussion forums and e-mail, delayed communication gives respondents time to think about their response and gather information from other sources before responding.

The theory behind *asynchronous* and synchronous communication is essentially the same: Point B needs to know when a transmission from Point A begins, when it ends, and if it was processed correctly. However, the difference lies in how the transmission is broken down. With asynchronous communication you would need to stop after every word to make sure the listener understood your meaning, and knew that you were about to speak the next word. With synchronous communication, you would establish with your listener that you were speaking English, that you will be speaking words at measured intervals, and that you would utter a complete sentence, or paragraph, or extended soliloquy, before pausing to confirm understanding. Further, you would establish with your listener beforehand that any extraneous noises you make during the speech or between speeches (coughing, burping, hiccupping) should be ignored. Clearly the second approach is much faster, even though initializing communication may take slightly longer. In fact, by replacing the start, stop and parity bits around individual words with start, stop and control (processing instructions and error checking) sequences around large continuous data blocks, synchronous communication is about 30% faster than asynchronous communication, before any other factors are considered.

Several distinct pieces of hardware must be configured around a common clock to initiate a successful synchronous communication link. This configuration must take two data lines into account, the

transmission line (the line it uses to send data) and the reception line (the line it uses to receive data). It is essential not only that all devices in the system be synchronized with each other, but also that each individual device have its transmission and reception lines synchronized as well.

There are three clocking methods by which to achieve synchronization: internal, external, and recovered clocking. All three methods derive the clock signal for the reception line from the incoming data. The clock signal for the transmission line will always be generated by the device's internal oscillator, but the phase reference used by the internal oscillator differs for each of the clocking methods. When internal clocking is used, the transmit clock is phase locked to the device's own internal oscillator. For external clocking, the transmit clock is phase locked to the phase of the oscillator belonging to another device in the network. For recovered clocking, the transmit clock phase is locked to the clock derived from the incoming data.

In general, the DCE device (such as a modem) uses internal clocking, while the DTE device (such as a PC) uses external clocking and synchronizes around the DCE device. However, in large networks with multiple devices this is not always possible. One solution for such networks is to have all devices synchronize around a single modem's clock source. However, this solution has the tendency to result in clock drift, and thus can potentially corrupt data. The other solution is to use recovered clocking so that a modem can derive the clock from data on its reception line then send that information out on its transmit line to be used by the next modem in line, etc.

Synchronous communication and collaboration tools, such as synchronous text chat, audio-conferencing, video-conferencing, and whiteboards, are increasingly important components of online learning. In order to ensure the full participation of learners with disabilities, these synchronous tools must be made accessible to them. In general, this means ensuring that the user interface of the tool, as well as the real-time communication managed by the tool, are both accessible, for input and output equally.

Common synchronous text chat accessibility problems include complex and non-standard user interfaces, some exclusively mouse-driven functions, need for simultaneous user attention to multiple areas



(i.e., message composition and message monitoring), fast pace of conversation may limit access by users who communicate slowly.

Learning system developers may enhance the accessibility of synchronous text chat applications for all users by following some practices like simplifying the user interface and following appropriate platform-specific user interface guidelines; providing help files, including an accessible orientation to the interface and its functionality; ensuring that all mouse actions can also be completed, effectively, from the keyboard; providing keyboard accessible mechanisms to enable the user to quickly shift the focus between the message composition and the message monitoring areas, the choice not to automatically move focus to new messages as they arrive, an option to manually refresh the list of messages and mechanisms that allow users who communicate slowly to participate effectively (e.g., speaker designation).

Audio-conferencing (via phone or Internet) allows two or more users to collaborate via real-time speech. In order to have access, users with hearing and speech disabilities must be accommodated by the system.

Common audio-conferencing accessibility problems include audio output that is inaccessible to users who are deaf or who have profound hearing loss; speech input that may be difficult for users with speech disabilities; some exclusively mouse-driven functions and fast pace of conversation that may limit access by users who communicate slowly.

Learning system developers may enhance the accessibility audio-conferencing applications for all users by ensuring that a real-time text transcript is available to participants. The transcript can be provided by any one of a number of methods (e.g., generated by effective minute taking, telecom relay service, or reliable voice recognition). They should ensure a real-time text-to-speech capability is available to participants via telecom relay service or automated text-to-speech and all mouse actions can also be completed, effectively, from the keyboard.

Video-conferencing allows two or more users to collaborate via real-time interaction that includes both video and sound. In order to be accessible, users with visual, hearing, and/or speech disabilities must be accommodated. Common video-conferencing accessibility problems include additional visual information such as graphs and charts that

may be inaccessible to users who are visually impaired; audio output that is inaccessible to users who are deaf or who have profound hearing loss; speech input requirements that may be difficult for users with speech disabilities.

Videoconference systems preferentially encode stationary elements of a scene, rather than dynamic ones. These automated choices can disrupt effective transmission of sign languages, since they depend on movement of some exclusively mouse-driven functions and fast pace of conversation that may limit access by users who communicate slowly.

Learning system developers may enhance the accessibility of video conferencing applications for all users by providing a mechanism for describing visual support elements and encourage the use of this function; ensuring that a real-time text transcript can be made available to participants. These transcripts can be generated by effective minute taking, telecom relay service, or reliable voice recognition. Once generated, this text transcript might be displayed by a sign language "avatar" (computer-generated signer). Real-time text transcription services can be accessed remotely; enabling the addition of sign translation services provided remotely. The tool should be designed to accept a second video stream arriving from another location; ensuring that a real-time text-to-speech capability is available to participants. Transcripts can be generated by a telecom relay service or automated text-to-speech software; investigating video encoding standards that facilitate sign language transmission, such as MPEG-4, ensuring that all mouse actions can also be completed, effectively, from the keyboard, providing mechanisms that allow users who communicate slowly to participate effectively.

Whiteboards are the graphical equivalent of synchronous chat tools. They allow multiple users to work on collaborative drawings in real-time. They often include functionality for drawing, painting and importing existing graphic files. Both the navigation system and the content of the workspace must be accessible for the system to be working. Common whiteboard accessibility problems include exclusively graphical workspace that is inaccessible to people with visual disabilities; when text tools are available, they often produce text in such a way that it is not accessible by screen readers; many exclusively mouse-driven functions.

Learning system developers may enhance the accessibility of whiteboard applications for all users by integrating an accessible synchronous text chat with the whiteboard and encourage users to use this function to describe their graphical work; ensuring that all mouse actions can also be completed, effectively, from the keyboard, implementing the workspace using SVG in order to take advantage of the access features of this markup language.

The access features of the SVG language include SVG images are represented as objects, so lines stay sharp when magnified. SVG objects may be labelled. Also objects can be grouped hierarchically. The hierarchical structure of these text equivalents works better than a single text description to convey fine-grained detail. SVG supports stylesheets, DOM2 for customizing presentation and Meta-data and RDF for efficient cataloguing. It supports device-independent events so operation is not limited to the mouse.

Multi-User Domain Object Oriented Environments (MOOs) are multi-user virtual environments in which users often control "avatars" (computer-generated actors) that move through the virtual world, interacting and communicating via speech generated from user-typed instructions. In order to be accessible, both the environment navigation system and the communicative exchanges between avatars must be accessible. Common MOO accessibility problems include some exclusively mouse-driven functions, complex spatial navigation of the MOO, visual information in the MOO, including the appearance of the physical environment and the other avatars, cannot be accessed by users who are blind. Audio output is inaccessible to users who are deaf or who have profound hearing loss. Fast pace of conversation may limit access by users who communicate slowly. Learning system developers may enhance the accessibility of MOOs for all users by providing a mechanism for automated text description of the virtual world; completing all mouse actions effectively from the keyboard; including powerful navigation tools for accomplishing high-level navigational instructions (e.g., "take me to the library"); providing mechanisms that allow users who communicate slowly to participate effectively; and ensuring a real-time text transcript can be made available to participants. This text transcript might be translated into Braille or even (from the listener's perspective only) signed by a speaking avatar.

Chatting on net is largely a familiar or informal conversation. It makes a natural space for communication. The language in a chat is usually composed of short phrases and a special lingo called “chat language”, which makes communication closer to a face-to-face (f2f) conversation. Some phrases and emotecons of chatting are well-known to the users.

In f2f conversation people make mistakes in a hurry, restart their words, rewrite their sentences, etc. In this sense, conversations in chatting are very similar to f2f conversations for the following reasons:

- Greetings are part of the “meeting” rituals.
- People talk without respecting turns; they shoot replies without waiting for the person who has the floor to finish.
- People introduce new topics without concluding the previous ones.
- Turn taking is not usually well distributed. Some people tend to hold the floor or participate more than others.
- Some people only listen to the dialogues taking place.
- Different threads may go on simultaneously: two or 3 people may talk about something while others initiate some other topic (even if they are not next to each other).

The fact that there are different threads does not mean that at the end each person has not taken anything out of the conversation, especially when they have met with a purpose. At the end of the conversation, we can read the log and learn about all the topics treated even by those we were not paying attention to.

Chatting has been neglected in the classrooms mainly due to the bad reputation of public chat rooms, and most educational institutions do not allow chat applications in their computer labs. In spite of the fact that research is needed regarding its benefits for language acquisition, the practice with students and colleagues has revealed many ways in which chat can be used to offer practice in a second or foreign language.

Warschauer (1998) narrates his own experience as a language learner of Hawaiian and how CMC was useful for him: “During oral

class discussion, it is not infrequent that I become lost, and thus receive no benefit. However, during computer-mediated discussion, no matter how complex, I can always reread the sentences, take out my dictionary, ask questions of the person next to me.”<sup>2</sup>

This reflection reveals that computer mediated communication (CMC) can reduce the level of anxiety of a language student. Affectivity has been considered by many educators (Dewey, Montessori, Vygotsky) in the past as an influencing factor in the learning process.. More recently, Rogers (1969) emphasized that the affective domain needed to be considered if global education was to be achieved. In the field of second language acquisition, Krashen & Terrell’s Natural Approach (1983)<sup>3</sup> proposed activities which are especially designed to minimize stress, following one of Krashen’s five hypotheses for language acquisition: the affective filter hypothesis. In this sense, the social nature of chat contributes to lowering the affective filter by offering a relaxing atmosphere for learning to take place.

Poole, Axmann, Calongne & Cox (2003) claim that “given the right conditions, the synchronous environment of the chat room can be a successful medium for learning.”<sup>4</sup> The several characteristics of chat which are used to enhance language learning are as under:

- Interaction with real audiences (those who listen in order to get the message and not its form).
- Receive input and produce output.
- Immediate feedback from interlocutors.
- No restrictions regarding location.
- Opportunity for negotiation of meaning.
- Collaborative learning towards knowledge construction.
- Opportunity for intake (what the language learner retains from the input received) through “language noticing” (a hypothesis of second language acquisition which states that for language to take place, students should be aware of what they learn, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, etc.).
- Chat logs (written transcription of chat) allowing for further analysis of conversation and adding coherence to the different threads of the conversation.

## Promotion of learner autonomy.

Most of these aspects have been considered by different hypotheses of second language acquisition: the input hypothesis (Krashen, 1985); the output hypothesis (Swain, 1985, 1993); the interactionist hypothesis (Long, 1985)<sup>5</sup>; the intake hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990)<sup>6</sup>, among others. The negotiation of meaning through interaction and modification of input has also been mentioned as a factor facilitating language learning (Long, 1985, 1996). More recently, Egbert, Chao & Hanson-Smith (1999)<sup>7</sup> have discussed eight conditions for optimal language learning environments, most of which can be fostered in chat: opportunities for interaction and negotiation of meaning, interaction with authentic audiences in the target language, students' involvement in authentic tasks, exposure to and encouragement to produce varied and creative language, feedback, metacognitive guidance, and an ideal anxiety or stress level.

Not many studies have investigated the use of chat in language learning, but the ones carried out reveal some interesting aspects. Pelletieri (2000) found that some of the patterns of computer mediated interaction are similar to those encountered in face-to-face interaction<sup>8</sup>: all aspects of the discourse serve as triggers for negotiations, task types influence the kind and amount of negotiation (difficult tasks promote more negotiation than easy ones), self-repair, corrective feedback, negotiation within negotiations. This seems to indicate that students made efforts to ensure their understanding of the messages. Chun (1994) also found that chatting seems to improve students' interactive competence.<sup>9</sup>

Language students, however, may find some difficulties in chat. Mynard (2002)<sup>10</sup> points out that if students' keyboarding skills are slow, they may miss part of the conversation taking place. Slow readers may find difficult to follow the sometimes fast scrolling screen. Chat lingo may result incomprehensible for newbies (people new to the use of web tools or Internet). Culturally-specific issues may result in misunderstandings arising. However, the assets of chat tend to outnumber the possible difficulties, which can be minimized with a good lesson plan and preparation on part of the teacher.

Chat can be used to improve different aspects of our teaching practice. Teachers are always short of time to attend meetings, or to

collaboratively plan activities. In chat we have found a great alternative to meet with colleagues from all over the world to write lesson plans, to prepare events, and to design joint projects. Collaboration and sharing are key words in professional development. Methods, evaluation, activities, course design, are just some of the topics that may be found in our chatlogs. We mainly use text chat, other times, however, voice, webcams, web pages and Power Point are used to enhance the presentations. E-learning and online components for f2f courses are the main issues behind our sharing and collaboration efforts, but teachers who do not teach online could benefit from online activities to enhance their f2f practice.

Moderating online is not the same as teaching f2f, and the only way to learn is with practice. Tutoring a student in chat is quite different from working with groups of students or whole classes in this environment. Internet offers the possibility to get in touch with students from all over the world (Yeh, 2003) who are eager to practice their English with native or non-native speakers of the target language. Teachers may also start practicing with their own students in the classroom, setting group tasks to be completed through chat.

Technology overwhelms us with new tools everyday, thus, exploring web tools is a never-ending activity for online educators. Sometimes these tools seem difficult and above our understanding. Chat give us the opportunity to explore and evaluate these tools with the collaboration and scaffolding (the help given by experts to non-experts) of one or more colleagues, who may have experience with it, or more technological knowledge to guide us in the process. Chat logs will stay there for those who come behind.

Participants have the opportunity to attend presentations given by people who can be in another continent, ask questions as if f-2-f without leaving their homes; and presenters have the chance to discuss their work with a wider and diverse audience which makes his/her work more relevant.

The main purpose of the chat is to practice the target language, to learn about and to explore web tools with the social scaffolding of colleagues or peers. There is not a pre-established agenda, and there is free moderation. Different threads are going on at the same time and each one joins the conversational thread of his/her interest. A good

example of this kind of chat are WIA Sunday meetings at Tapped In, where English teachers and students worldwide get together to discuss about web tools and the best way to incorporate them into their educational contexts in a friendly atmosphere.

Participants get together in a chat to accomplish a real-life task. The activity should be planned and structured in such a way, the once in the chat, participants know what they are there for, and they are responsible for going through a process to be able to accomplish the objective of the activity, which might be a final product, or only a sub-product to be used as resource for a following activity. In this kind of chat, there is no need for a moderator: the same group establishes the norms and handles the situation to complete the task in the allotted time. Two good examples for this type of chat: some teachers gathered in a chat to design a strategic plan for a week we had to moderate for one of the TESOL Electronic Village Online 2003; and when my architecture students worked to share the characteristics of the different buildings each student had to read about and come up with the shared characteristics, which were going to be used in further tasks.

These chats have the purpose of presenting material. Usually, the moderator has prepared the material in advance, and the topic for discussion has been previously announced to the audience. It may be in the form of a workshop, where the presenter shows, hands-on, how to do something and the participants have to get involved in the “doing”; a demonstration, where the presenter shows how to do something and the audience asks questions but is not involved in any other action; a presentation, where the speaker only presents information and expects the audience to ask questions - it can be the presentation of a program, a methodology, results of a research, etc; a swap shop, where each participant brings material on a given topic to be shared, discussed and analyzed during the chat; a discussion, where the presenter brings a couple of questions to be discussed or brainstormed. Guest speakers could be an enhancing element for these academic presentation chat. Sometimes latecomers to the chat do not know the approach that has been set, and are eager to participate, and the discussion may take different roads not getting where it was supposed to.

The objective is that students in the chat practice a given function of the language with other students and the moderator (e.g. role playing



an interview, practicing a function of the language, individual or group tutoring). These are very closed-topic chat, and the moderator usually establishes the rules and turn taking style.

As far reaching as it might seem, chat has been used to assess students' learning (Marta, 2002)<sup>11</sup>. Teachers can administer online quizzes while in a chat with students, ask questions to be answered by individual students, prepare debates on a given topic and then use the chatlog to check the participation and contributions of each student. Immediate feedback is an asset of chat as a medium to administer evaluations.

In a recent research, Margalit & Sabar (2003)<sup>12</sup> found that most students and teachers believe it is possible to learn using chat. They like learning via this medium and believe moderators are important to conduct the sessions. Students and teachers believe chat have a positive influence on creativity, thought-generation, social relations, and learning. Teachers place great importance on the e-moderation aspect of chat.

Here is a comment made by a Venezuelan student after her participation in a video-chat unit (Gonzalez, 2003): "it was really a new and innovating learning English class, hope this method would be applied in the future with other students too."<sup>13</sup>

It is important to point out that some chat may mix some of the categories based on whether the session has different objectives or there is a need to introduce a new element.

As we have seen, chat is an unexploited tool for language learning and teacher development. The collaborative construction of knowledge that can take place through chat should be considered by teachers. Social constructivism emphasizes the importance of learning through social interaction and collaboration (Glaserfeld, 1989)<sup>14</sup>, and chat seems to be the ideal space for this kind of learning.

Students seem to prefer the synchronicity of chat over the asynchronous modes to interact online. Chats do not promote learning on their own, their effectiveness lies in the way the activities are planned and carried out within the framework of the syllabus of a course. It is our responsibility as teachers to learn to use this environment to ensure optimal conditions for the students' performance.

Of course, there are some features of f2f conversation that are missing in chat, namely body language and voice at supra-segmental levels. The use of webcams and voice may help to overcome these obstacles. However, voice applications and webcams are still far from substituting the physical presence of the interlocutor, even though emoticons do help to express some feelings in text chat. Chatting cannot be used effectively for teaching or correcting lexical items or syntax. It cannot be taken as a product to be evaluated in terms of grammar and spelling.

It is hoped that this taxonomy of educational chat can help teachers plan chat activities for their students, and to select the type of chat that suits their syllabus, students' age, level and interests, and at the same time, teachers consider using chat for their own professional development.

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# Paris and Europe after WWII: Memoir of a Young New Yorker

Howard Wolf

The American expatriate writing of the 1920's, especially F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway, pointed towards Paris and Europe: *The Sun Also Rises* and *Tender Is The Night* ("Babylon Revisited"). I wanted to participate in the Parisian literary worlds that Hemingway describes in *A Moveable Feast* and Gertrude Stein captures in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, even though I didn't read those books until my thirties. The grandson of an immigrant who had been traumatized in the "old world," the son of a garment manufacturer who thought Europe would be a reminder of his impoverished Lower East side childhood, I ached nonetheless to make a version of the Grand Tour.

About this time, the flowering of adolescence, I discovered English and American Literature and wanted immediately, without explanation or warrant, to be an American writer. I learned quickly – by reading Modern Library book jackets and their prefaces – that most writers had traveled. I understood that writers traveled in order to write and wrote about their travels in order to make sense of experience. I could see that there was an inner and outer map and that the two cartographic spheres were related. If one wanted to form an image of the whole world, one had to go "abroad," as it still was called.

As a young American who became aware of the world in New York City during the Second World War, I was an instant patriot and wanted to be sent to what were for me then far-flung parts of the globe – France and Burma – so that I could, like my Left wing uncles and summer camp counselors, fight the genocidal German Nazis and sadistic Japanese militarists.

I didn't know the explicit horrors of the Holocaust or the Rape of Nanking, but I knew that innocent people were suffering; and I wanted to do something about it. Writers, like doctors, and some people have been both (Somerset Maugham, William Carlos Williams), often are driven by the impulse to alleviate pain – of the body, of the soul.

I wanted to help save Europe, and, ironically, or prophetically for me, there was a version of it close at hand. Our family lived on the fourth floor of the last apartment house on Fort Washington Avenue, the highest point in Manhattan, towering above the Hudson River, overlooking Fort Tryon Park and The Cloisters, the Medieval Branch of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

There were glimpses of pheasants, if not peasants, in wooded areas, and there were real Sunday painters with oils and easels, people who, I learned later, might have been subjects of a Seurat painting or, if they had stayed in Europe, been incinerated in a Nazi death-camp. This was my introduction to France and Europe before I knew that I had to go to the Continent as part of my education, my Grand Tour. As a young person, I was more interested in the pleasures of life than the horrors of war. It wasn't until the Viet Nam war that the disasters of war became a specific reality for me.

The Cloisters was, literally and symbolically, part of Europe *in* America.

Many of the actual and structural elements of several cloisters had been brought from France and Europe. These cloisters were ones that might have been blown to smithereens, had they not been removed from Europe. I wanted to help save some of the endangered and persecuted Europeans just as these historical objects of beauty had been preserved.

I was young and idealistic, of course, and innocently egotistical, if that is possible; and I knew that stones and people were different; and that people were more important than stones. But, somehow, living near The Cloisters played into my literary and moral imagination.

More influential than the atmosphere of The Cloisters as prompts to write and travel, since I was an All-American city boy eager to assimilate, was the living atmosphere of New York City in the 1940's and 1950's. Looking back to my high school years in New York City, I realize that forms of French culture existed in Manhattan at that time. One could see occasionally at the Paris Theater on W. 56<sup>th</sup> Street, across the street from the Plaza Hotel, French diplomats exit from limousines with their distinctive CD license plates. And you could see artistically sexy movies at the Paris; it was one of the few places where you could

see respectable movies with meaningful erotic experience. And espresso was served in demi-tasse cups in the banquette-lined lower level lobby. Edith Piaf songs were played in the background, and I saw adults who looked as unhappy as the people in her songs. I then wanted, of course, to be unhappy, but in a French way.

In fact, there were few places in those pre-Starbuck years where one could have European style coffee. Another place was The Coffee Mill on E. 56<sup>th</sup> Street, if memory serves me, where one actually could see men wearing berets whispering in the ears of Chanel No. 5 scented women who had gone to Sarah Lawrence or Smith and wore silk scarves.

Smith even had a French House for “girls” who had spent a junior year abroad. To enter that house was to part the beaded curtains of Hemingway’s “Hills Like White Elephants.” If my French had been better, my college years would have been more exciting, and I would have learned more about my contemporaries.

It was thrilling to observe these people having steamy conversations if you were a kid from Upper Manhattan, especially if you knew about The Cloisters and its fabled Hunt of the Unicorn tapestries. For me, sipping coffee in the aromatic Coffee Mill was a prelude to transatlantic travel. In historical retrospect, coffee may turn out to have been an elixir of Europeanization for that American generation. We are now in a period of Asianization, and green tea is *de rigueur*.

Another place where one could have espresso and cappuccino in those days was the garden restaurant of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). One could discuss existential angst in Camus’s *The Stranger* with a date or friend (some dates were even friends) as one looked at a Giacometti sculpture. One hoped, that she, if it was a date, would find one’s privileged suffering appealing, a prelude to an intimacy that existed in those days only in French movies. I could imagine even, for a moment, that I was Humphrey Bogart wooing Ingrid Bergman in *Casablanca* – that inspiring anti-Fascist tribute to the French love of liberty. I wanted to join the *Maquis* and sing the *La Marseillaise*. I didn’t know about the intellectual betrayals of the *Action Francaise*, but I was moved by the fall of the Maginot Line.

One might even see a real existentialist or an American version of one. I once saw a bitter looking man in an oversized and wine-stained black overcoat, biting on a tooth-pick, *shlumping* his way between a Rodin and Lachaise statue in the garden with a hefty volume of Sartre's *L'Être et Le Néant (Being and Nothingness)* stuffed in his pocket. He was bigger on Nothingness than Being as everyone learned who got close to him. At some point, repulsed by the existence of others, he would tell everyone to "drop dead." That person turned out, years later, to be a cynical, unpleasant, and ultra-conservative colleague at my university who thought that the student protests of the 1960's were reincarnations of the Stalinist crimes and purges of the 1930's. He mistook Street Theater of protest for the Moscow Show Trials. He thought the student leaders at Columbia University should be shot. Still, he was a veteran of Brasserie Balzar and French café life in the post-war period and a reminder that ideas were taken seriously somewhere. This person tried to get me fired during the 1960's because he thought I was a radical, so I guess that he wasn't as much of an anti-Stalinist as he thought he was.

My chance for the Grand Tour and *wanderjahr* came during 1956-57 when a late uncle of mine who lived in a state of permanent psychological exile (the diaspora of his soul) asked me if I would be his chauffeur and companion for a year in Europe. Without knowing much else about the deal, I accepted, took a year's leave of absence from college, and flew to Copenhagen, our first meeting place, via Gander (Newfoundland), Shannon, and Paris. It broke my heart to see the mansard roofs of Paris appear and disappear on the way in and out in transit, but I knew I would get back to them after a few months in Scandinavia and Britain.

And when I did meet Hemingway at the Ritz Bar, he told me, belting down a double scotch that he was going to hunt pheasant in Spain in a few days. At first I thought he said "peasants," and I thought that was a lousy thing to do, especially for someone who had written the inspiring story of the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), *For Whom The Bell Tolls*. But when the right word clicked in, I thought of the fowl in Fort Tryon Park and wanted to stop him, but said nothing. He was Hemingway, after all. He shot himself a few years later. I should have said something.

And so I did get back to Paris. I sat at several (but not all at once) of the Left Bank's fabled existential cafes in St-Germain — Café les deux Magots, Café de Flore, — and wrote letters home to my great Amherst College friends. I told them about meeting Hemingway and seeing a number of over the hill celebrities slumped over café table tops. This was when writing letters became an important part of my life. One morning I sat next to the still almost beautiful Paulette Goddard. We both were reading the *International Herald Tribune*. Another morning I sat next to Errol Flynn. Hung-over and scruffy, he was more or less reading the *International Herald Tribune*. I concluded that, no matter how life treated one, or one treated life, one still could and should read the *IHT*. I still do.

I didn't dwell on what I might call a "tragic vision" too long. I was too young and Paris was teeming with the sort of life that ignited my imagination. I bought books at the stalls of the "bouquinistes" at Quai St. Michel and went to the "caves" in the evening where I heard some of America's fabled expatriate jazz musicians: Sidney Bechet and Sidney de Paris. Books, jazz, hopeless flirtations, and a failed attempt to write a novella as appealing as Francoise Sagan's *Bonjour Tristesse* kept my mind off personal and historical disasters most of the time. If I had any conscious regret at the time, it was that I didn't speak French well enough to enter into serious conversations about life in Paris and France under the Nazi Occupation and the Vichy regime. At that time in that place, the resistance fighters, the writers and intellectuals who had risked their lives to publish the underground *Le Combat*, were my culture heroes. Some of them seemed to be in the cafes listening to *le jazz hot*, but I couldn't talk to them easily.

I didn't want to leave Paris, but I was traveling as a restless uncle's chauffeur, and he wanted to move on. And so we drove through most of Europe, a good deal of it still scarred with the ravages of war. Some German cities, Cologne and Stuttgart, were still mainly flattened blocks of rubble. Most Italians couldn't afford to buy a whole pack of cigarettes. I recall the operator of a cable car at Pompeii who held me suspended off the edge of Vesuvius until I doled out a few *Camels*. I smoked in those days, of course; I thought that smoking cigarettes, just like drinking espresso at the Coffee Mill, or being named Sidney, would help me become an American writer. The Delft blue of the *Gaulois* package represented the fusion of life and art.



Needless to say, I doled out the butts. He let me out of the gondola, and I was on safe ground again; but I was beginning to learn that the Hollywood movie of life didn't always have the happy ending that it had more or less for my post-war boom generation and that writing about life was more complicated than ever I thought it would be. "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" sounded hollow to me when I returned from Europe.

As it turned out, I didn't return to France for a decade. The year of travel, in retrospect, had been more traumatic than I thought it had. When I did go back, I had an accident on a motor scooter in Brittany and broke my left wrist. While I was recovering, I met someone who had fought in the resistance, but my French had eroded a good deal by this time, and I was able to learn less than I wanted to know. I did learn that this Jewish man, one of the lucky survivors, regarded *Twelve Angry Men* as the most important movie he ever had seen. He said, in a French I could understand, that it had restored his belief in justice. This made me proud to be an America. He told me about hostages, mainly Jewish, being rounded up and shot in groups of fifty by the Nazi occupiers and Joseph Darnand's French Militia.

As I walked through the center of Concarneau, my arm in a cast, I remembered a passage in Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms*: "The world breaks everyone and afterwards many are strong at the broken places." I thought of my first trip to France and how naïve I had been at the outset to think that a set of postures and affectations, however stylish and Francophilic, could make one a writer. At the same time, I thought that those postures were starting points of departure, that the failure of those postures were, in fact, part of a writer's education – a necessary part of his journey.

I returned to France again in my literary imagination in the late mid-1970's when I wrote and published *Forgive the Father: A Memoir of Changing Generations*. A late uncle appears in the somewhat fictional memoir as "Ben." He gives me a copy of *The Sun Also Rises* as a farewell present at the Gare du Nord and wishes me well in my ambition to be a writer. I ask him where he bought the book, and he says, "I picked it up at some creep bookstore." "Shakespeare and Company?" I ask. He doesn't know and doesn't care. Paris in the 1920's and America's literary exiles are not important to him. But they are for me, and when

the book was published, I sent a copy to Shakespeare and Co. One of my former students saw the book in the window and sent me a postcard from Paris. I can't say I made it in Paris, but I had returned to it – a peasant under glass, as it were.

Had I not had a difficult year with my uncle, I might not have had a book to write. It took me several decades to realize that my uncle had brought aspects of the tragic vision into focus for me. Without it, a writer is dead, even if he writes comedy and satire. The tragic vision is as important as Hemingway's "built-in, shock-proof, shit detector."

It's hard not to return to Paris. Hemingway says at the end of *A Moveable Feast*: "There is never any ending to Paris... We always returned to it." I returned, as I've mentioned, when I crashed against the curb of a café in 1969. I lay in pain with a twisted wrist and blood, as well as spilled espresso, pouring over my face. I couldn't get away from espresso.

I didn't get to the *terroir* of France until 1987 when I spent two weeks on a farm near Cahors with an old flame and her companion, a brilliant and inspiring, it was said, teacher at a well-known college. He chastised me one morning for thinking so well of George Orwell whom he found to be too personal. This advanced contemporary, who was on a first-name basis with some of New York's leading intellectuals, though he had not yet published at age fifty a word, urged me to reconsider the impersonal positions of the Frankfurt school, the "science of man."

I urged him to put down his book, something by Adorno or Marcuse, and to look closely at the farmer in the next field who was laboring with a crow-bar to unearth a boulder from his field. I suggested that he might be able to write something about *this man* if he observed him closely and used him as the model of "a worker." He looked at me with something like muted contempt and said, "Reading is my business."

I knew something about "working titles," so I could understand, if not accept, his position. He knew what Hegel meant by tragedy, but he couldn't recognize a Sisyphusan struggle at close range.

I returned again for a few days in early January, 2005 en route from Israel, where I had been lecturing, to Buffalo. I stayed at the charming Hotel Des Grandes Ecoles, 75, rue du Cardinal Lemoine 75005

Paris. Hemingway and his wife Hadley lived at 74 rue de Cardinal Lemoine in 1922. He says in a letter to a friend, "This is the place for a man to live" (to Howell Jenkins, 8 January 1922). Paris is still a good place to live, I'm sure, but it isn't, for many reasons, the Paris that Hemingway knew. One of those reasons is the knowledge that Paris is one of the places from which Jews were deported to their deaths.

I spent a pleasant few days in the Hotels des Grand Ecoles, but the knowledge of the Vichy collaboration with the Nazis and its horrific consequences dampened my mood as much as the cold rain of that evening – the tragic vision, again. I had to put down the champagne glass of memory in the light of Europe's rubble, moral and physical.

As George Orwell says in "Why I Write," a writer needs to be able to face "unpleasant facts." I learned to do some of that later. This is one reason why we need good journalists; without them, our leaders, civilian and military, can violate all moral principles and treaties in the name of abstract nouns – freedom and democracy. Thomas Wolfe says, "I had found out during those years that the way to discover America was to leave it." Bartleby is asked in Melville's story if he would "like to travel...." He says that would "like to be stationary...."

I can not speak for being "stationary." I can think of a few people who have managed to learn a good deal by staying in one place, and I don't want to make a case against meditation, prayer, and the possibilities of revelation; but even saints, as well as sinners and writers, have been known to make long journeys before they come to rest. One thinks of Saul of Tarsus.

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