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The Aligarh Journal of English Studies is edited by Mohammad Asim Siddiqui and published by him on behalf of the Department of English, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. The Journal aims at bringing out twice a year (April and October), critical and research articles dealing with subjects in all areas of English studies together with detailed and careful book reviews. Contributions should be addressed to the Editor and emailed at ajesenglishdepartment@gmail.com Stylistic and other conventions as recommended in the latest edition of MLA Handbook should be strictly adhered to.

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The Aligarh Journal of English Studies was started in 1976 by eminent bilingual scholar Asloob Ahmad Ansari, the then Head of the Department of English, Aligarh Muslim University. Published on behalf of the Department, the journal has published articles and book reviews on all areas of English studies with special attention to Shakespeare. Keeping in mind the drastic changes in the nature of English studies in recent decades, the journal is open to accepting submissions on all emerging areas of English studies. For some unavoidable reasons this issue of the journal is appearing after a gap of more than a decade. However, it is heartening to note that from this issue onwards *The Aligarh Journal of English Studies* will also be available online. All previous issues of the journal have also been digitized and are available on the web page of the Department of English, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.

Mohammad Asim Siddiqui
Editor

MOHAMMAD ASIM SIDDIQUI

THROUGH THE EYES OF *THE ALIGARH JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES:* MOMENTS IN THE NARRATIVE OF LITERARY CRITICISM AT ALIGARH

The role of literary criticism in defining, explaining, interpreting and shaping literature cannot be underestimated. The history of literary criticism at the Aligarh Muslim University is almost as old as the teaching of literature in the university. Ever since literature teaching started at the university academics at the university have produced a substantial body of English criticism. These academics included the English faculty at the Department like Sir Walter Raleigh (his book titled *Wordsworth*), Erid Hamer (*The Meters of English Poetry*), F.G.Fielden (*Three Essays of Sir Walter Temple*, edited with an introduction), as well as Indian faculty members like Itrat Husain (*Mystical Element of the Metaphysical Poets of the 17th Century*), Ghulam Sarwar (*17th Century Restoration Prose*), Amalendu Bose (his books on Browning, Tennyson and early Victorian poetry) and G. Singh (his book titled *Swinburne*).

Though members of the Department would keep writing articles and occasional books, literary criticism at the Department would get a firm foothold, or rather a habitation, as late as 1976 with the launch of the *The Aligarh Journal of English Studies* (henceforth *AJES*). The articles published in the journal--their variety, their focus on some specific areas, the gradual change in focus and, importantly enough, the standing of the writers contributing to the journal—have their own narrative. In the pages that follow an attempt is made to analyse some of the most memorable articles published in the journal so as to capture the threads of this interesting narrative. These articles can be considered important moments in the history of the

journal.

The journal, started by noted Shakespeare and Blake critic Asloob Ahmad Ansari, was devoted to English Studies in its purest form. If Shakespeare was the toast of scholars, as the articles published in the journal bear out, major figures from Romantic and Modern literature had their own avid takers among major critics. From the very beginning the journal has had an international identity and scholars and critics from different parts of the globe, particularly from the English-speaking world, took pride in contributing to its pages. Critics of the stature of F. R. Leavis, Wilson Knight, Laurence Lerner, Kenneth Muir, Kathleen Raine (In fact, Raine contributed numerous articles to the journal) and E.M. Forster have been published in the journal. Some idea of the literary criticism published in the journal by these distinguished critics will help in giving a glimpse of the literary debates in the 1970s and the 1980s.

Kenneth Muir, a very prominent twentieth century Shakespeare critic, the author of works like *Shakespeare as Collaborator, A New Companion to Shakespeare Studies, Shakespeare's Sonnets and Shakespeare's Tragic Sequence* contributed on almost a regular basis to the *AJES* in the eighties. In his articles published in the journal his distinct style can be glimpsed. His two short essays on *Hamlet* are not only very readable but they also throw rich light on the different lines of interpretations that the play encourages. In the article titled "Four Notes on *Hamlet*" (6:115-121), as the title suggests, he offers four interesting lines of inquiry on *Hamlet* in a very lucid manner. In the first section of his article, he discusses the source of an extract from Dido play in the second act of *Hamlet*. Whether it came from Shakespeare's reading of Marlowe or from Virgil and what could have been the reasons for Shakespeare's taking some liberty in presenting his material is Muir's argument in this section. In the second section he turns to another aspect of textual criticism namely the difference between *Hamlet's* quarto 1 and 2. What is today called printer's devil (or typos) is to be seen in the many attempts to copy Q 1. Whether Shakespeare wrote 'his' or 'this' or "Corambis" or "Polonius" is

discussed by Muir. Interestingly students today in Indian universities are usually not taught these aspects of textual research. In the third section Muir discusses how out of eight uses of the word "conscience" in *Hamlet*, at least one may not mean a sense of right and wrong. "But Shakespeare is a wily bird. As Hamlet says, he is not so easily played upon as a pipe. Although the primary meaning of conscience seems incontrovertible, it is quite possible that Shakespeare was aware of the other meaning; and the two meanings are implied in the lines in the last soliloquy in which for the first time Hamlet wonders why he has not yet killed his uncle...

Here we have conscience related both to reflection and to moral scruples, and, as in the earlier soliloquy, conscience (in both senses) is the apparent cause of cowardice" (6:119). In the fourth section of the essay Muir takes the performance aspect of *Hamlet* and discusses how three different stage performances of *Hamlet* are essentially Bradleian, how they all "believed with Eliot that Shakespeare's theme was the effect of a mother's guilt on a son" (6:120), and how they all bear the influence of anti-war sentiment following World War

After discussing the various influences on stage productions and film versions of a text as complex as *Hamlet*, Muir reflects his distaste for simplistic interpretations of the play and their pitfalls: "Such influences are inevitable; but one cannot help feeling that directors sometimes sacrifice the deeper significances of Shakespearian tragedies by pretending that he is our contemporary" (6:121).

Kenneth Muir's another article entitled "*Hamlet* among the Ideologues" (13:67-71) also talks about the "dangers involved in interpreting Shakespeare's plays in the light of our prepossessions, since our interpretations will be predictable and therefore suspect" (13:66). This short article appears a kind of journalistic piece without any footnotes, just to illustrate a point about the necessity of not being tied down to one particular approach in interpreting *Hamlet*, and by extension any text. In a very witty manner Muir talks about seven different positions on *Hamlet* that he took spanning a period of five decades. The

seven positions result from his familiarity with Orestes complex, with Fabian society, his ethics springing from his belief in Christianity, his interest in French existentialism, his exposure to stage, his politics and finally his fascination for word- play. He makes four very interesting points about the dangers of what he calls ideological positions. (The word ideological, following Althusser, is probably the single most important concept in today's criticism. Muir's use of the term, though pre-Althusserian, contains a little bit of today's connotation in his discovering the anti-war nature of the performances of *Hamlet*.) Muir believes that all seven positions offer a partial picture and curiously they invite the opposite interpretation also. Shakespeare, he says, should not be used "as a means to an (our) end and there is also the danger that…we sacrifice our own complexities, as well as Shakespeare's when we plug a particular ideological line" (13:70).

AJES has also published some rare transcripts of discussions and interviews of celebrated names in English criticism. The special number of *AJES* on *Hamlet* published not only Muir's four notes on *Hamlet* but it also carried Brian Stone's interview of Wilson Knight on the characters of Hamlet and Claudius. In this interview Wilson Knight says some very revealing things about the character of Hamlet. He considers Hamlet's behaviour and attitudes very negative. In fact, his behaviour poses a kind of public danger. Claudius in Wilson Knight's account emerges in a very positive light and even his end is not considered "ignoble" by Knight. "Claudius is a man of reason, commonsense, normality, and a good governor. He is not a genius, but he is effective, and he sets about solving international problems by peace rather than by war" (6:140). Though Wilson Knight is what Stone calls "a practical theatre man", and he has something useful to say about how *Hamlet* should appear on the stage, his unwillingness to consider Claudius's marriage incestuous also has a ring of German reception theory: "…though the Ghost and Hamlet call Claudius' marriage incest, Claudius himself, and the court, show no signs of regarding as a sin. In sexual matters much may depend on convention, and conventions change. The marriage is, within the

play's many transitional valuations, clearly a borderline case. Today it would not be considered incest at all" (6:142). Using insights of postcolonial criticism, it can be added that if we took Knight's opinion outside the European world, the variety of views about incest and taboo would only confirm Knight's relative position on incest.

The distinguished names in English criticism mentioned above wrote on different authors and subjects and not only on Shakespeare. One of the most valuable pieces in the journal, entitled "Eliot's Permanent Place" was contributed by F. R. Leavis, one of those occasions when arguably the most influential critic of his time published outside *Scrutiny*. In retrospect the timing of this contribution, a footnote in the *AJES* announces it as the "text of an unpublished lecture delivered at the Catholic University of Milan", acquires significance. It was published a year before Leavis's death and four years after T. S. Eliot's. The piece calls to mind Matthew Arnold's essay on Wordsworth written thirty years after the great Romantic poet's death. Arnold, it may be recalled, had done the task of evaluating Wordsworth and placing him in the canon of not only English but world literature. Leavis, a successor of Arnold in many different ways—in his insistence on tradition, in his stressing the importance of English literature, his contempt of the marketplace and above all in his grand evaluation project—tries in this essay to achieve many things dear to him. Written in his inimitable style which includes analysis, evaluation, strong personal opinions and what Eliot once called innuendo in Dr Leavis's criticism, the essay also presents some contradictions in Eliot's personality. One such contradiction was Eliot's clever willingness to give himself over to Bloomsbury group. Leavis, who never made his dislike for the Bloomsbury group a secret, avers that Bloomsbury's appreciation of Eliot was not intelligent. And true to his style he adds the example of Lytton Strachey to stress his denunciation of Bloomsbury: Bloomsbury's "ethos is given you in the fact that it produced Lytton Strachey, and offered him to the world as a distinguished—even great—writer. What it found congenial in Eliot was the obvious and impudent daring of the technique, the showy sophistication, and the

ironical 'disillusion' that it could feel, without suffering anything that disturbed the habitual Bloomsbury complacency, to be both profound and its own" (2:128). Leavis would score a point or two over the Bloomsbury by analysing Eliot's less talked about poem "Portrait of a Lady" which the "not intelligent" "advanced young" (Leavis's characteristic turn of phrase) missed. The qualities of this poem that Leavis stresses include its "living play of tone and inflexion", "its very poetic rhythms and metric" and above all a very "poetic use of the spoken language and the speaking voice "(2:129). Leavis takes delight in the fact that these qualities, perceptively discovered by him, were missed by the Bloomsbury.

Leavis praises *The Waste Land* but believes that "a higher kind of creative achievement than it actually was" (2:126) read into the poem and that is because of its being initially published by Hogarth Press, a Bloomsbury publication. Leavis is also critical of Eliot's tendency to seek the approval of wrong people. Eliot, according to Leavis, never really helped the disinterested critics (obviously Leavis is one of them) "who wanted to get real (that is, intelligent) recognition for his real distinction" (2:136). And Leavis, the disinterested critic that he considers himself to be (Arnoldian presence is unmistakable), establishes the superiority of *Four Quartet* over *The Waste Land*. Interestingly, contrary to all that talk about Eliot's use of *The Golden Bough* and the widespread view about the universality of meaning in the poem, Eliot's attitude to life and people and to men and women in *The Waste Land*, Leavis believes, is "morbidly personal one". Even *Four Quartet*, according to Leavis, is Eliot's personal statement.

In this piece Leavis also discusses Eliot as a religious poet, another major dimension of Eliot's poetry. Eliot's dependence on Dante is also explained by Leavis especially in *Ash Wednesday*. All through this piece Leavis's humanist—today we would call them liberal humanist—concerns and contempt of the marketplace view of the world are very prominent. He is critical of the fact that in his time in the collective educated view there is "no higher end to be considered

than a rising material 'standard of living'" (2:132). Expressions like "our civilization", "plight of humanity", "human predicament", "human condition", "and bankruptcy of civilization" and "our world", a staple of Leavisite criticism, are scattered on almost every page of the text of this lecture.

There appears a fair bit of Leavis's prejudices as well in this lecture. He considers linguistic science a "menace" (2:140). His comment on Lytton Strachey, quoted above, is at best an example of a prejudice or what Terry Eagleton would describe as inane gossip. In fact, critics like S. Wiqar Husain have rightly disagreed with Leavis's opinion about Stratchey. In a very balanced piece Husain discusses the form and content—its departure from usual biography and history writing—of Strachey's major biographies. While taking into account the denunciation of the biographer-his use of clichés, his limitations as a psycho-analyst or his distortion of facts-- Husain praises, among other qualities, Strachey's "keenly felt and highly organized experience of history" (5:213), "his pervasive irony" (5:216), "his view of the human condition with an unmatched coherence, clarity and emphasis" (5:217), his presentation of "the complexity of human behaviour" and his "satirical wit" (5:219).

II

Since its very beginning *AJES* focused attention on British writers. Even among British writers Shakespeare received special attention as many of the faculty members at the Aligarh Muslim University were engaged in a serious study of Shakespeare. The write-ups by Muir and Wilson Knight are just suggestive of the interest of many other distinguished English critics who wrote on Shakespeare for *AJES*. The journal in its first thirty odd years published approximately 75 scholarly articles on different aspects of Shakespeare's art. The very first issue of *AJES* defined the character of the journal by including three articles on Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night, Othello* and *Henry V.* The choice of the three plays is indicative of the wide- ranging focus on Shakespeare's entire canon, his comedies, tragedies and history plays. In other words, a statement to the effect that the

journal would not confine itself to Shakespeare's four tragedies or his major comedies but will take a researcher's approach to exploring all possible aspects of Shakespeare's art including the canon of Shakespearian criticism. In fact, from 1976 to 1995 there was no issue of the journal, except for some special numbers, which did not include an article on Shakespeare. Mention may be made of, apart from Asloob Ahmad Ansari, Z. A. Usmani and Maqbool Hasan Khan who regularly explored aspects of Shakespeare's genius in the pages of the journal.1

The quality and distinct identity of Shakespeare section in the journal owes a great deal to a series of articles and book reviews on Shakespearian criticism by Maqbool Hasan Khan. Shakespearian criticism appears to be not only his area of interest but a passion he has pursued since the beginning of his career. In his long career as academic-critic he has not only seen different trends in Shakespeare studies but has also acquired mastery of these trends. His deep study of the history of Shakespearian criticism together with his interest in philosophy has further equipped him to write knowledgeably and perceptively on different dimensions of Shakespeare's art. His critical and perceptive analysis of Dowdon's biographical approach, Bradley's philosophically coherent character studies, Walter Raleigh's 'humanizing' of Shakespeare, E. E. Stoll's historical perspective on Shakespeare's technique especially stage conventions, together with Khan's intelligent asides on the work of numerous other Shakespeare critics—among others, Coleridge, F. R. Leavis, Granville Barker, Wilson Knight, L.C. Knights, Derek Traversi, Kenneth Muir—make for very stimulating reading.

Reading Maqbool Hasan Khan's many pieces on Shakespearian criticism one gets the impression that just as in the work of some critics and schools a holistic approach to Shakespeare, considering all his works as a totality and not one individual work, is emphasized in the same way the entire corpus of Shakespearian criticism is a necessary reading for arriving at the proper understanding of one Shakespeare critic, minor or major. Probably with this view in mind, in his writing, even

when he is writing on a single critic, it does not matter whether he be Dowden, Walter Raleigh or E. E. Stoll, Khan takes note of the work of almost all relevant Shakespeare critics belonging to different periods and schools. His characteristic method of reading a critic is to place him in a proper cultural perspective, linking his work to the work of other critics in terms of his technique and philosophical orientation and evaluating, in often comparative terms, the impact of different critics on his work. In the same way he traces the history of a concept or idea relating it to an older idea establishing linkages which an innocent reading would have missed. Thus when he credits Dowden for being one of the first critics to have embarked on "a systematic critical study of Shakespeare's plays in a chronological order" (2: 260), he also mentions scholars like Marlone, Furnivall and Fleay who may have helped Dowden. In tracing the history of personalist approach to literature, that Dowden adopted, he not only traces its roots to "disintegration of formalist classicism" and the "growth of a certain introspective self-consciousness" at the end of 18th century but also considers humanism to be the basis of both neo-classicism and romanticism: "It is possible, ironically enough, to trace the origin of this change (interest in experience and personality), one that dealt the death blow to the neo-classical conception of literary culture as sharing in the common fund of given experience, to the circumstances surrounding the birth of neo- classicism itself "(2:251).

In another remarkable and perceptive piece on Shakespearian criticism he touches on the thematic readings of poetic critics of 1930s like L. C. Knights and Derek Traversi, and considers them to bear the influence of 'modernist poetic'. While acknowledging their departure and difference from what had so far been attempted in Shakespearian criticism, Khan makes another interesting observation on their link with Romantic and Victorian conception of Shakespeare: "their reaction notwithstanding, the poetic critics of the thirties and forties were at one with their Romantic and Victorian predecessors in not only discovering schematized ethical patterns in Shakespeare but also in a neglect of his essentially dramatic communicative mode"(11:168). Khan also makes a fine

distinction between historical approach commonly understood and the one adopted by E. E. Stoll which essentially focused on theatrical conventions of Elizabethan drama. While acknowledging Stoll's effort to restore an Elizabethan Shakespeare, Khan links Stoll not with Dryden, Johnson, Taine and Dowden, for whom the period of a work's production was very important, but with the modernists. He believes that "the anti-realism Shakespearian criticism of Stoll, artifice and convention oriented and opposed to simplistic notions of verisimilitude, may legitimately be approached as an anologue and ally of the modern, sophisticated, self-conscious, symbolic and poetic drama" (11:173-74). Never one to express his critical opinions tentatively, Khan's evaluation of Bradley is to be seen together with his approval to Stoll's accent on the traditional dimension of Shakespeare's plays: "…the fact is undeniable that in the process of philosophizing and psychologising of Shakespeare, the dramaturgy is not only ignored but inappropriately and unjustifiably transformed into vision "(11:181). His praise of scores of Shakespeare critics and his love of philosophy notwithstanding, his own position on the bard is very close to Stoll's. He expresses it in his essay on Walter Raleigh's criticism: "If Shakespeare is the greatest of the creative writers in English, it is not because he had some abstruse, esoteric philosophy, or philosophy not esoteric but philosophy still, that could be deciphered with the help of other philosophies; Shakespeare's kind of drama marks the apotheosis of improvisation that moves from imperfection to imperfection and yet achieves a comprehensiveness unparalleled anywhere else" (12:42).

Obviously, the wider frame of reference of Maqbool Hasan Khan's work is the many trends in criticism and the orientation of different schools of criticism. And because he has so much to say about his subject of study, his writing, at times very dense but never lacking in clarity, is characteristically marked by allusions to the work of other critics and concepts. The intertextual connections in his writing impart it a distinctive flavour. Even one short sentence can serve as an example. While talking about Shakespeare's self-revelation in the context of his

time he says that "in our age of objective correlatives and symbolic forms" (12:34) the idea may appear unpromising. While the reference to Eliot's theory of impersonality may be obvious in this, the allusion to Cassierer's view of man as a symbolic animal may go unattended because Cassierer, a rage in the period of archetypal and myth criticism, is little read today by literature students. Many other examples may be quoted from his writing where he writes very long sentences containing allusions to different works and authors. In his writing one frequently comes across a long sentence with many parentheses, each parenthesis packed with reference to some other work, often a very weighty idea which makes one think. That his writing is always interesting is almost a given. In fact, it goes to his credit that his writing arouses the interest of the reader into the subject; first it whets his appetite and then satisfies it to his delight.

The remarkable thing about Maqbool Hasan Khan's Shakespearian criticism is that he has also taken note of some very recent approaches to Shakespeare in his writing. The entire paradigm shift in literary studies following the onslaught of theory made many older academics/critics hostile to new trends because it meant a total disinvestment of what they had acquired in the major part of their career. It is not a question of unlearning what they learnt so diligently but rather of bracing oneself up to a newer and a stiffer challenge. Khan is equal to this challenge. He finds merit in new historicist approach also. He also takes note of the work of deconstructionist like Christopher Norris and Marxist-deconstructionist like Terry Eagleton in some of his recent pieces on Shakespearian criticism. The very vocabulary used in one recent article entitled "Interpretations Interpreted: Foregrounding of History in Shakespearian Criticism", its new historicist slant unmistakable, suggests his willingness to welcome the new in literary studies. One gets the impression that there is a logical link between his earlier distinction between two different notions of historicism and his ready acceptance of the more radical kind of historicism of the nineties in which power and ideology are the key concepts and the Elizabethan age,

particularly the works of Shakespeare, is the focus of attention. There were shades of new historicist approach in his earlier criticism, certainly his earlier criticism is oriented towards welcoming the new historicist approach, though new historicism proper became a currency much later. In this piece his use of expressions like "decentered", "ideological construct", "social formations", "history-as-text" or "subversive force" bear out not only his keeping pace with the new but also his earlier belief that the history of Shakespearian criticism shows the rise and fall of many orthodoxies.

III

Even as Shakespeare, and for that matter Shakespearian criticism, was the focus of attention, *the Aligarh Journal of English Studies* never lost sight of literary criticism proper and prose fiction. For a period spanning two decades, Edward H. Strauch of the University of Maiduguri, would write a series of articles on literary criticism. His first article titled "Image, Metaphor and Symbol" which appeared in the second issue of *AJES* was a statement of sorts that the journal would not confine itself to the applied aspect of literary criticism alone. Later, in different articles he would write on Freudian and Jungian approaches; discuss the roots of the science of literary criticism; explore various forms of genres of literature and analyse the nature and limits of New Criticism.

In talking about articles on criticism and prose fiction the names of G. Singh and S. Wiqar Husain can specially be mentioned. Both Singh and Husain write with clarity and conviction. An interesting feature of their style is their selection of interesting and relevant quotations to substantiate their point of view. From a reading of many of their write ups one also gets a very interesting idea of not only the subject under study but also of the literary politics of twentieth century Britain. Husain's criticism is further enlivened by his opinions, introduced unobstrusively in the text, on the nature of literature, art and reading in general. Thus in his essay on Lytton Strachey's biographies he supports the idea of reading for pleasure if it does not imply "a tacit rejection or undermining of the thematic aspect

of the work in question" (5: 212). In the same way in his essay on Virginia Woolf 's criticism he comments: "Perhaps no work of literature, worth the name, can help being somewhat allegorical or symbolic "(7:197). In fact, this essay together with the one on George Orwell displays not only the fine analytical ability of Husain but also his confidence and clarity of mind in expressing his disagreement with strong critical opinions of Virginia Woolf and George Orwell. At the same time that he explains the nature of Virginia Woolf 's literary criticism, commenting intelligently on her subjective critical use of terms like life and soul and considering the mastery of perspective the "central principle of her criticism, he also finds her criticism of Walter Raleigh "rather unfair" , her views on E. M. Forster "unacceptable", her attitude to biography "a little condescending", her dismissal of *Eminent Victorians* not really an example of "sound judgement", her verdict on Joyce's *Ulysess* "not up to the mark" and her celebratory essay on Meredith "wasteful". Husain starts his article on Orwell with a very strong statement saying "…the essay, which can be traced back to Montaigne, was not his forte" (9:90). In this essay he considers Orwell essentially a sociological critic whose lifelong commitment was to truth, freedom and fight against totalitarianism of all sorts. Orwell's strong opinions on different subjects are critically analysed and the article is less about Orwell's style and more about his views expressed in his essays. In this piece also Husain does not shy away from disagreeing with Orwell's many opinions. Thus, in the essay on "A Hanging", which reads like a narrative, Orwell's little comment is considered "a little sentimental", his preoccupation with an author's tendency is suggested "a weakness" and his distinction between prose and verse is "a flaw" in Orwell's art. Husain is convinced that Orwell lost "his multi-dimensionality" of early years.

G. Singh's approach is marked by his sympathetic handling of his subject and unlike Husain he generally approves of the opinions of critics he is writing on, rarely, if ever, venturing any critical remark. Singh's write-ups on the criticism of F. R. Leavis and Q.D. Leavis clearly bring out aspects of their

credo, their strong opinions, *Scrutiny* approach to literature and their standing in relation to their other illustrious contemporaries. The article titled "F.R. Leavis: Later Writing" (3: 125-152) sums up the content of the tremendous output of Leavis after his retirement from Cambridge. Basically a *survey* of what Leavis wrote in his later phase, this piece also brings out the significance of Leavis's writings on subjects other than literature, topics as varied as education, university and civilization. Leavis's championing of Lawrence's originality is specially stressed in this article. In another article Singh discusses Q. D. Leavis's equally exciting criticism. Her anthropological approach to novel in which reading public has an active role in the writing of literature makes very interesting reading. On reading this article one can conjecture about Q. D. Leavis's relevance in the context of today's cultural criticism. The article published in the same year as Foucault's death quotes Q. D. Leavis thus: (The English novel) "is the art most influenced by national life in all its minute particulars. It has also been the art most influential upon English national life…" (9:187). In three other very interesting essays Singh's subject is Ezra Pound, the writer of crisp and meaningful letters and a promoter of the cause of modernism. In numerous letters that he wrote to his contemporaries like Eliot, Joyce and Yeats in his inimitable style marked by abbreviations, verbal economy and pithiness of presentation -discussed and quoted by Singh extensively- Pound talks about literature, the state of publishing, the nature of modernism and such subjects like only he could. All three essays give a peep into the literary politics of the day, the strains in the relationships of some of the iconic figures in modern literature, people like Joyce, Eliot and Pound. Above all presentation of literary gossip and politics, that too in a very interesting manner, supported by right quotations makes for breathless reading. Singh scores a perfect ten for being engaging and informative.

IV

In the literature courses both at the undergraduate and the postgraduate level the dominant tradition has been to teach English literature. In fact, English was synonymous with English

literature. After America emerged as a super power following World War II, American policy makers would also invest in promoting American literature, and of course American English would also gain a foothold in the Indian academic system. American literature would make a definite headway in the sixties. In India a good start was provided with the establishment of American Studies Research Center at Hyderabad which not only stored a huge collection of books and periodicals on American literature under one roof but also liberally sponsored the visits of scholars and sanctioned easy grants for promoting research in American literature. Its impact on research on American literature, particularly in the southern part of India and in Orissa, has been phenomenal. However, it would take many years before American literature would achieve the kind of respectability reserved for the British literature. Though an occasional poem or story by American authors figured in literature syllabuses, systematic teaching of American literature at the Aligarh Muslim University started in the sixties in the form of an optional paper at the postgraduate level. In a few years' time though American literature had firmly established itself in the university system, the articles published in *the Aligarh Journal of English Studies* on American literature were few and far between. In fact, American literature was rarely discussed in terms of its many divisions along genre, period, region and ethnicity lines like it is the norm today. The first article on American literature entitled "The Dimensions of Revolt in Emily Dickinson's Poetry" (2:90-100) was contributed by Salamatullah Khan, an expert of American studies and one of the most loved teacher-scholar that Aligarh has ever produced. M. Yaseen wrote the article titled "An Aspect of *The Ambassadors*" in the next issue of the Journal (2:221:30). Interestingly in the same issue S. Wiqar Husain reviewed Stephen Spender's book on British-American relations entitled *Love- Hate Relations*. Except for some occasional articles on Ezra Pound, Hemingway and Tennessee Williams, that too on their selected works, *AJES* appears to have shied away from accepting contributions on American literature liberally. It can also be seen that most of the American writers on whom articles

were published in the journal appeared on the syllabus at some level. Here a special mention may be made of three different articles on Hemingway's *Old Man and the Sea* by Edward H. Strauch. The articles were titled "*The Old Man and the Sea*: A Numerological View" (6:89-100}), "*The Old Man and the Sea*: An Anthropological View" (9:56-63) and "The Old Man and the Sea as Testament" (17:66-81).

American literature, though different in significant ways from British literature, is still discussed together with English literature in terms of its ethos, values and western world view. Articles published in the journal on American literature could slip in without raising an eyebrow. However, there appears some shift in the journal's focus from 18.1 (1996) onwards. This was the first issue of the journal since its inception when the journal went without an article on Shakespeare. Though *AJES* would occasionally include write-ups on Shakespeare in its future issues, Shakespeare henceforth would figure less and less in the pages of the journal.

The nature of change is suggested by the fact that the journal would start looking beyond Shakespeare, the Romantics and the modern British literature. Though there can be many reasons for the lack of interest in Shakespeare—non -availability of Shakespeare experts is one of them-one important reason was respectability acquired by some new areas which were not even discussed earlier in high-brow circles of literature departments. Indian Writing in English which drew a blank till about the mid-nineties made a gradual appearance. There is some irony in the fact that Shakespeare's loss is the gain of literature other than British. And perhaps to heighten this ironic effect it can be mentioned that Renate Sarma, a German scholar and a faculty member at the Aligarh Muslim University teaching German language who specialized in Indian fiction contributed a couple of articles on R. K. Narayan even before she wrote on classic German novels like *Buddenbrooks* and *The Tin Drum* and Harish Raizada, who is now considered one of the pioneers of criticism on Indian Writing in English with books like *R. K. Narayan* and *The Lotus and the Rose: Indian Fiction in English*, never

published anything on Indian Writing in English in the pages of the journal, though he contributed quite a few articles on British fiction. G. Singh who otherwise had been writing regularly on English prose, fiction and criticism wrote an article titled "Gandhi as Prose Writer" (17:82-96). The first write-up on Indian literature in English was contributed by Maya Shakar Pandey titled "Animal Imagery in the Poetry of A. K. Ramanujan" (19:73-83). More articles on Indian Writing in English have appeared in later issues.

The opening up of the journal to other areas of English studies is also noticeable at the turn of the century. Attia Abid's article on the content and context of Australian poetry was published in 1998(20). An article on Canadian writer Margaret Laurence, published in 1993 itself, had compared her fiction with that of Anita Desai's. English Language Teaching made its debut with Ismail Baroudy's long article titled "A Cumulative Approach to ESL/EFL Writing Pedagogy in 2002 (24:59-104). It will not be out of place here to recall that articles on stylistic analysis, --stylistics combines both literature and linguistics and as such is a borderline case--had already appeared in the journal. A special mention may be made of Syed Asim Ali's brilliant and fairly exhaustive stylistic analysis of Philip Larkin's poem "Afternoons" (13:207-223).

It is really debatable if all change is identical with progress. Taking its cue from the recent changes that have affected established notions about literature, English studies in India and at the Aligarh Muslim University is now a fairly inclusive phenomenon, including in its fold a variety of areas. Some literature departments in the country have been rechristened, some swallowed by the monster of cultural studies in which there is the danger of extreme catholicity, of 'anything goes' phenomenon. In this state of cultural anarchy there is also a sneaking feeling for some stability, for holding on to some centre, for not letting go the core of English studies and for retaining some of the basic character of the subject. There is also this feeling that *AJES* which has unwittingly reflected this change should retain its basic character. Unlike English studies, a

journal can afford to maintain its special character without being charged with parochialism. There are journals devoted to specific subjects. There would be still others which would concentrate on specific areas of English studies. *AJES* can ill afford to totally break free from its past, to discard its illustrious pedigree. In all fairness it should not.

Note

1. Asloob Ahmad Ansari's criticism is discussed in a separate article. And much as I would have liked to discuss Z.A.Usmani's penetrating articles on poetry and fiction, ranging from Dante to James Joyce, from Shakespeare to E.M.Forster and his equally critically alert book reviews especially on Shakespeare, space does not permit me to deal with his work in this piece. However, I must add that his brilliant critical work, though sparse yet marked by his unmistakably deep and focused scholarship, is an important chapter in this narrative of literary criticism at the Aligarh Muslim University.

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K. NARAYANA CHANDRAN

OF NOTE:
TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF "NOTES" IN ENGLISH PERIODICALS

Abstract

A formatted species of submission, variously called "Notes and Observations," "Research Notes," or simply "Notes," has received practically no critical attention it deserves. Editors, contributors, readers, and the review committees that evaluate faculty publications approach this precious genre differently. A note's relative brevity, its space relegated usually to the closing pages of journals, its skimpily formatted marginality in double columns, and above all, its seemingly fragmentary address and readerly appeal account for its general neglect. This article looks at "Notes" (treated as singular) tracing its history and drawing attention to its varied uses as professional announcements and news; and kinds such as philological, pedagogical, expository, explicatory, emendatory, and annotative. The article glances at such renowned "Notes" periodicals as the British *Notes & Queries*, *American Notes & Queries*, *English Language Notes*, etc. The many strengths of "Notes" listed in conclusion attest to its continued influence and relevance in English scholarly communication. Few submissions, longer and more expansive than "Notes," could legitimately claim its manifest brilliance in planning and execution. The profession of English in the world has certainly benefited by keeping "Notes" as

a vibrant venue for enriching textual, theoretical, and pedagogical engagements across many generations.

Keywords: Notes; mnemonic function; annotations; interim reflections

This article neither canvasses "Notes" nor does it defend this specific genre, format, or the practice of publishing "Notes."[1] "Notes" is a time-honoured segment of most scholarly periodicals. It hardly needed, or now need, any defence, while our professional English journals often experiment with, and adopt, e-formats of critical thought most suited for their respective scholarly communities across the world. Blogs look like "Notes" but their readership is not as steady or respectable as that of its time-honoured forebear. My bias for this genre of publications granted, I see scholarly notes and comments playing a serious and useful role in what we call the business of criticism. We are obligated to our paymasters in some measure, and I imagine our occasional short contributions serve as some evidence of where we live and what we live for. In such notes, I often see and hear the affirmative gesture of our teachers in publishing such highly perishable stuff. This they do, despite their awareness of the risk their short articles of faith run when hasty decision-making bodies prioritize long papers and longer discussions in the format of monograph and edited papers/ the *festschriften*. Within a fiercely competitive world directed by standardized indices of impact, metrics, scores, and credit points, shorter contributions fight hard to survive. Our betters in the profession prefer to look the other way from *all* publications, long or short, when they cite the phrase "other things being equal." Few among us understand what "other things" can possibly weigh heavier than the published work of teachers, but that is hardly a question to be asked if you are an applicant or supplicant.

Professional calls and compulsions however distinguish Indian teachers of English from those in other parts of the world. In the Anglo-American and pan-European institutions of higher learning, English is no big game as either language or literature to the public at large. A good majority of the educated public in

Britain and North America are apt to wonder whether there is so much to learn and so much to teach (in) a language that ought to be, according to them, so intelligibly spoken and plainly written by their people. In any case, *research* in English, according to them, is rather dubious. As Barbara Herrnstein Smith once put it, there is good enough reason

> why research in other fields economics, genetics, physics, and so forth can be, without complaint or criticism, difficult for members of the general public to understand or indeed totally incomprehensible to them, but not research in literary studies. … The difference is that literary studies, and especially English, is, for many people including, it seems, many journalists not a discipline at all. English is simply their own native language, which is understood by anyone who speaks, reads, and writes it; and the only thing that makes English professors *special* is that being, perhaps, unable to do anything else they have chosen to get paid full-time for doing what everybody else does part-time and *could* do full-time if they were not so busy holding down real jobs. (292)

Those of us who profess English here need not, on Smith's count, feel guilty about our English teaching or research as indulgence of a kind at public expense, at least for two valid reasons. First, more than us, the young India wants English, even *needs* it, for many purposes as yet unlisted by the official ELT-regimes of the world. Everyone wants English in India for a number unspecified reasons both personal and political, although none will name them in public. Second, more than anyone else, I believe, teachers need more English, pragmatically-attuned kinds catering to more *professional* services than ever before. In the ethnically, socio-economically, and religiously diverse classrooms of towns across this large country of many languages and dialects, English teachers face more challenges to perform differently. Largely in compliance with market-driven needs and aspirations, they face more pedagogic challenges than their peers in the STEM

disciplines. Only that the public and the academy have been seeking *low-cost* means to achieve high-end English literacy in India, although the New Education Policy 2020 is rather coy in stating this aim and ambition in plain terms. The less our custodians of higher-education speak about such obvious needs for their English-driven and sustained curricula, the more hypocritical their statement of objectives becomes.

I have set the remit of my article to a species of research publications in professional journals variously called "Notes," "Research Notes," or "Memoranda and Documents." I have reasons to think this species to be dead, at least moribund, in the spirit in which they were disseminated before the new electronic and online journals bolstered the wide circulation of scholarship. Space and pagination are no longer a constraint for the electronically-sponsored free flow of words or their vastly liberal habitational formats. I marshal some evidence, and a few details culled from the pages I have consulted, for this. But first, let me begin with a history of "Notes," however patchy, I have managed to trace.

History

As far as I know, the earliest journals published English research notes alongside those in German and Romance languages (except *Notes & Queries*). The European journals claim precedence in the dates they record on their mastheads as the first journals ever to publish English research. *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, founded in Germany by the philologists Ludwig Herrig and Heinrich Viehoff, is clearly the pioneer in this business. It began publishing scholarly notes on literary subjects in German, English, and Romance languages from1846 onwards. It is still a current periodical. The British *N & Q* has been publishing short articles, queries, and book-reviews since1849. Its founding editor, W. J. Thoms, envisaged it as a forum for asking and answering questions on English linguistic, literary, and historical matters, largely sponsoring what he called "literary antiquarianism." Since 1878, *Anglia: Journal of English Philology* has been in the field. Its publisher, De Gruyter, is headquartered in Berlin. It still publishes articles and notes on

Anglo-American subjects. *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* has been publishing notes and essays under the aegis of the Modern Language Society of Helsinki since1899.[2]

One common feature of these pioneering venues of English literary and cultural journalism is their unswerving commitment to *philological* research. Practitioners of English pedagogy intuitively grasp basic philological methods although they might not have quite known that they have been only doing the right thing with the texts they teach. The text-made words and word-made texts are the stock in trade of philological research. As all teachers do, we use standard annotated classics and commentaries on them for the classroom. These editions are our mainstay, fine products of editorial erudition and annotation that thoughtfully close gaps in comprehension and make for the critical appreciation of the texts at hand. The teachers savour the fruits of this labour when they write their extensive commentaries for publication. Research journals thrive on such "Notes" work, however short and text-centred. The "Notes" sections of journals collect precious details otherwise unavailable or arcane, and attend to the minutiae of meticulous editorial processes, memorabilia and evidentiary documents of textual transformations and interpretive refractions in successive printing and publishing histories. Sometimes they also address the fortunes of reception of canonical authors and texts across the world. The "Notes" journals are unanimous in declaring that *factual evidence*, however thin or small, is never to be dismissed as insignificant. As a corollary, ideally, a note would then tell us how our engagement with a text or textual phenomenon, will be accordingly new, or that engagement will since be seen in an altogether different light. In this, the forensics of a philological note match the rigour we see in good juridical and medical research.

Are these "findings" important for the language teacher? I believe that they are. Teachers are a special category of readers. First of all, their reading records, and draws upon, a private history of reading. Second, as readers, they *make* their students' history of reading as well. No wonder, a majority of scholars

fondly recall their first *reading* experience of texts they found most exciting or difficult, and under what peculiar circumstances they read them. This history progresses when they work with classes/ generations of students who often lead them to some of their brilliant insights, or set them off to unpredictable trails or send them back to the texts they seem to have insufficiently parsed within the lone walls of libraries or studies. This is the value of philological notes. They often reflect how readers read other readers, and join in a conversation on this unusual way of human thinking as unique enjoyment.

A language teacher's professional enjoyment, let us say, is indistinguishable from a note-writer's when they seem to agree that what they teach is first intelligible to themselves, and that this intelligibility is worth talking about, first, among their peers. Take as an example, the cruxes we chance upon while reading: the "two-handed engine" of "Lycidas," or the many turns and counterturns in "Ash Wednesday." First of all, the Notes address some textual crux or the other *in order to understand it.* Or, how better one might understand the crux in a disciplined understanding of its received (conventional) understanding. Needless to say, it is not enough for a conscientious teacher to privately recall a Eureka moment but to share it with a larger community of professionals who would like to know how, on what terms or grounds, the teacher concerned either resolved it or offered a plausible solution, an alternative reading, that allows an honorable breakthrough.[3] And that experience is, to repeat, the quintessentially *personal* in scholarship, a dimension one misses in most pretentious scholarship that offers ex- cathedra interpretations, emanating mostly from political-ideologically surcharged quarters. Opinionated masters seem to know all, and too much about, say, *What Maisie Knew*, for example. Listening to them, we feel, regrettably, that what *we* have known all along about Henry James's eponymous character was pretty little, or largely mistaken, in comparison. A longer article allows space for punditry on parade, a scholarly marathon, or a fact-laden cross country. A Note, on its part, begins with a small but radical thought. It runs a sprint on a short track and must breast the

ribbon of revelation in record minutes. We are sure that its small questions will linger, and now lead to bigger ones eventually.

"Notes" as Habit

Let us consider the age-old twin practice: first of making *a* note of this or that; and then, of *making notes*, systematically collating and recording the information on hand, as the first step. For most of us, this is essential before we dare make any public presentation (a speech, classroom lecture, participation in a discussion forum, open lecture, debate, interview, a written submission, deposition, referee report, an academic affidavit, etc.) and how this thinking is deeply ingrained in our pedagogic tasks. Here are two entries under "Note" in the *OED*:

> IV.14.a.
>
> 1532–
>
> An explanatory or critical annotation or comment appended to a passage in a book, manuscript, etc.
>
> 1548
>
> IV.15.a.
>
> A brief written observation, record, or abstract of facts, esp. one intended to aid the memory, or to serve as a basis for a more complete statement or for future action. Frequently in plural.[4]

Both entries, dating back to the sixteenth century, underscore a common practice, prudence shaping a habit with literate people, their notes serving a basically mnemonic function leading to a well-organized presentation. Notes, as always, are advantageous for future reference, but while making them, for carefully choosing appropriate words for prospective and retrospective action. This is the simple reason for keeping records. We do not want to burn the paper-bridges once we cross ponds of immediate textual trouble, or having navigated large textual

waters with little trouble. The Notes helped, and they will, again, when we return to the texts, as we must.

This *academic* habit persists in all business where people put pen to paper or go digital. Compare how the back-up in electronic materials nearly matches the paper records in files and folders, and how we have not kept the promise we have given ourselves of paperless offices. Be that as it may, the habit of recording a fleeting thought on a day (entries in a diary, for example) is so common. The point is that we dare not miss an important finding that might follow some deep reflection. The happenstance of ideas finds a home in scraps of paper or a commonplace book.

The very first number of *N & Q* carried the following, hoping that its readers know at once its preference for short articles and its rationale:

> Can any man [*sic*] in his wildest dream of imagination, conceive of anything that may not be –nay, that has not been – treated of in a note? Thousands of things there are, no doubt, which cannot be sublimed into poetry, or elevated into history, or treated of with dignity, in a stilted text of any kind, and which are, as it is called "thrown" into notes; but, after all, they are much like children sent out of the stiff drawing-room into the nursery, snubbed to be sure by the act, but joyful in the freedom of banishment…. Where do you so well test an author's learning and knowledge of his subject? – where do you find the most elaborate pith of his researches? ….[5]

The inaugural numbers of literary-scholarly periodicals were categorical and unanimous in promoting "Notes." For example, an editorial note in *Modern Language Studies* I. 1 (1886) clearly announced what "Notes" was meant to do in its pages, explaining that prospective readers would look forward to seeing what scholars generally felt about the subjects they teach (for *MLS*, chiefly, "languages and literatures in English, German, and the Romance idioms"). In short, the editors preferred to see

"frank and unbiased criticism with reference both to personal views … and to the numerous text-books and other works that are constantly appearing in this branch of learning. … These 'Notes' will be especially adapted to the use of teachers and will contain … short discussions of pedagogical questions …" ("Introduction," 1). Implicit here is the professional interest of teachers desiring to stay *au courant* in their respective subjects, or be informed about specialist approaches to the discipline itself, that the "Notes" often provides along with reviews of recent books and periodicals.

Modern Language Notes again used its earliest numbers to consider what "Notes" it preferred. Wm. H. Carpenter's "With Notes" deals with expository notes meant to help teachers of foreign languages. His special attention is directed at books/ texts in French and German "with notes," annotations and short commentaries that help both English teachers and students. This Note of two-and-a-half pages covers issues likely to be overlooked in pedagogic philology. He adds that for all the help a good editor gives, "the teacher is supposed to be a live commentary, not only upon the text itself, but on everything connected with it" (69).

The Professional Wager

Scholarly societies are virtually *clubs*. Its members are entitled to the enviable privileges that go with the advantages of highly restrictive admissions. What determines the character of this engagement will be the professional objectives and urgencies of the club that functions as an "invisible college" that circulates printed news and views, features discussion fora, records comments and responses on the reports of work in select specialties of work in progress, or announces proposals for new and promising avenues for studies. Not to speak, on rare occasions, of its inviting and honouring members from allied or affiliated fields of study to bring in fresh air and afford new vistas of knowledge. For all the formal and informal gatekeeping strictly in place in such clubs, they not only extend and enlarge the interests of their members but invite them to jointly invest in certain kinds of research, fashion alternative methods or approaches to the "standard" or "orthodox" specialties, or redirect

their energies toward certain trajectories, either proposing or setting newer agenda for future work. Most "Notes" journals in the English discipline originated as forerunners of the later, more specialized, "Working Papers" venues of scientific/quasi-scientific disciplines. While "Notes" mainly makes for the timely and immediate impetus to scholars to report on their major findings, relay a chance discovery or incidental revelation, the "Notes" also offers broad avenues for interim reflections and queries that set minds thinking about new directions in reading or teaching. However tentative, the options so afforded are plausible or possible, accompanied of course by advanced proviso for correction, revision, or reformulation of ideas so published. "Notes" is the format that sets its remit as *notes*— ad hoc, tentative, *provisional*.[6]

Let us now look at "Notes" as the best wager in our professional transactions of the scholarly kind. The academic community to which we belong, *English Studies* as its name and nature broadly suggest, ought to pay more attention to this precious format of publication if only because our professional time seems too short to study and assess longer work: full-length monographs, edited collections, longish articles of 6000 to 10,000 words. The point, however rude the following may sound, is that a tendency we find in most published papers is to prolong discussion rather than begin it at once by hitting the nail on its head. Given that anyone who wields a hammer is apt to see nails everywhere, most professional journals now insist that authors of longer submissions provide succinct abstracts of 150 to 300 words along with their submissions. (Some Call for Papers/ websites of journals, ironically, suggest ways of writing what would pass for a decent abstract.)

It is debatable whether the abstracts alone would have done just as well for us to decide whether our reading game is worth the candle. In most cases, a minor shred of fact, a small detail, an accidental discovery of some dubious correlation, a missed narrative beat in a plot, cannot be plainly stated upfront, for fear of being taken as too obvious, trivial, or inconsequential. But the awesome circumstances of its discovery, the elaboration

of its consequences that purport to change the fortunes of future reading, are necessary for most writers to feel contented. If their thesis could just as well be so clearly or pithily stated in the longish paper's abstract, who will read the whole article, its elaborate commentaries, digressive remarks, and passionate expostulations?

That explains somewhat our discomfiture with so much distended work we usually read in specialist journals. Reading them, we cannot help feeling that the writer's objective primarily is less in what their article says, or how brilliantly deployed its articulate energies are, than in the situation that led to its composition in the first place. In worst cases, if the writer is an established name in literary/ cultural studies, a little self-posturing and pompous throat-clearing are unavoidable before they come to the point. "Notes," however, is no place for chatting, nor does it afford room for inordinate claims. Ideally, a note-writer should only state at the outset their purpose and focus it sharply. So much, as the famous William Carlos Williams's wheelbarrow reminds us, depends on *how* a note invites notice, rivets our attention. At issue here is something readers have not seen, or a little they have not quite minded yet, that is crucial about a text in question, or a context so occluded in their hasty reading. A good note would say why we return to such commissions or omissions, our small errata of readerly conscience upon which the note-writers cast their censorious light. We visit "Notes" because we remember something about a text we cannot quite name or recall. Or, because we do remember everything about it so well that we might wonder why.

Michael West's article still remains for me a professionally astute consideration by far of scholarly publications (*College English*, 1980). The year it appeared; my own publishing was beginning to bloom. I was then discovering pretty good avenues appropriate for my modest short and long articles, mostly reworking and fleshing out papers from my dissertation chapters. West's review article is a fairly detailed overview of the politics and potentialities of editing, reading, and publishing literary periodicals, appearing at a time when the *MLA*

Directory of Periodicals (1978- 79 edition) and *The Scholarly Communication: The Report of the National Enquiry* (1979) were available to us simultaneously. There was much to learn, and slowly imbibe, by returning to that article time and again since, but I find West's brief remarks on "Notes" still useful to remember today. He cautioned me about "the market for notes under ten pages [that] drops off sharply" in comparison with "the galaxy of periodicals" open to reading longer work (908). I still find his opinion perplexing though that "the restricted market for notes reflects the editorial feeling that … they are relatively trivial works in a minor scholarly form …" (908).

Before we leave this segment, let me pause to add that the "Notes" format has changed considerably in the new millennium. One example that I would cite is the "Of Note" section of *English Language Notes* (*ELN*). This journal used to be a splendid venue for shorter articles and discussions favouring philological, explicatory, and annotative work related to textual genealogy, sources and analogues. No longer committed to this sole aim at present, it welcomes articles focused on thematic clusters, longer essays on polemical thought. And yet, Nan Goodman, its lead-editor for a 2020 volume, introduces a new section called "Of Note." From what we gather from her "Introduction," *ELN* is now open to publishing "reviews of articles from a wide selection of academic journals on a variety of topics of interest to students and scholars of literature …" (180). Of course, such "reviews" will be shorter than full-fledged articles. They are "intended to be," as Goodman cares to add, "thought experiments rather than conventional reviews, engaging the reading audience in the topic at hand rather than focusing on the virtues or defects of the presentation" (181). This is a new format for "Notes," a blended mode if you will, that updates newer themes, offers readings of current topics, besides engaging in a conversation of sorts among the "Of Note" contributors themselves. What is unclear to me however is what passes for "thought experiments" and how a reader can avoid the compulsions of a "conventional" reviewer unless hand-held in such matters by someone like Goodman herself who would finally decide that one's short contribution to *ELN* on a very solid essay in another periodical is *of note*.

Perhaps the Indian teachers of English departments ought to take a leaf out of the *ELN* editor and open up their own periodical sites, and modify the regulations appropriately for young scholars (senior research scholars, assistant professors) to submit their working papers/ notes. If longer articles are hard for beginners to write (let alone find publishing venues for them), let them begin with their short articles, reviews, brief interventions at discussion forums, interviews and scholarly exchanges among their peers. Let us not fancy for a moment that others, mostly from abroad, will open doors for Indian scholars to publish, unless we begin making our small habitations for our work. If English is truly multidisciplinary as we claim, let there be more periodical commerce between and among the human and social sciences, and hope our notes and their queries will meet on some pages of our own.

Here, in sum …

Of the many strengths I see in "Notes," here are some. Or some more. At the cost of repeating a few, and returning to nuance a few others, let me try to be as brief as possible in listing them.

1. A fact: most papers originate from a small node or cluster of ideas. (This should occasion no surprise because no human brain thinks or organizes thoughts as essays, each of twenty-odd printed pages.) Another fact: A reader's engagement with texts is historical and contingent. What that means is that every reading presupposes (even anticipates) another reading, at least by the same reader. Once more, and mostly at a later point in time. There is, therefore, more rigour to the engagement of facts than what one might apprehend all at once. Such a re-engagement can now abridge and condense details that a longer format of an earlier report necessitates. A short, sharply-focused reading then can alight on singular and most significant details more effectively. "Notes" not only attends to well-known facts, but affords a clearer focus on them when reconsidered in a circumambient light. Ezra Pound used to call such facts "luminous details."[7]
2. Once "Notes" configure facts in a general sense, and those serving a mnemonic function to readers in particular, it can

galvanize professional support from readers, influence their thinking and action, more successfully than long articles. The immediate appeal of "Notes" is to a like-minded, scholarly community, a fact to which Richard Ohmann adverts when he wrote: "Instead of an entrepreneurial model of scholarly and professional writing, based on old ideas of individual genius, isolated work, and intellectual property, such work [as appearing in the *Radical Teacher* blogs] will be participatory, dialogic, and collaborative" (Ohmann *RT* 12 ff.). This community profiled by Ohmann is of course digital, but the *spirit* of such bloggers is basically that which we have learnt to share with the authors of "Notes."

3. "Not *even* a Note?" Often queried by our fault-finding elders, this masks an assumption that "Notes" are easily published; that they can be shaken down an obliging tree just a week before selection committee meetings to which one is summoned. The demurrer does not realize that writing a note is often harder on the scholar than writing a long essay. Its pithy and succinct style is hard won. Avoiding bench-pressing rhetoric and slow elaboration (beating *about* the bush, as they say) is not easy for novices. (In any case, what we suggest to students addicted to clichés and wordiness, is the point. While teaching composition, we are known to emphasize clarity and prioritize cohesion achieved by using less words, sparse rhetorical tricks, etc. The virtue in brevity and precision is as much applicable to Language students as it is to the Science/ Technology students who are tutored in writing lab reports.)

4. "Notes" highlights brilliance of a writer's mind in a short space and time; it allows the writer to identify at least his/her blind spot. ("To 'occupy a blind spot' is not only to be blind," reminds Shoshanna Felman, "but in particular to be blind to one's own blindness; it is to be unaware of the fact that one occupies a spot within the very blindness one seeks to demystify" (199). That done, the mind begins to work seriously, not hoping that everything goes by luck in composing a note. It does not. Relentless writing, rewriting and revision, alone will give the note its flow. That happens

when you see that all decision making (where to begin, what evidence to marshal and in which order, paragraphing, extra comments to wind up a neat discussion …) is intuitive rather than laboured or contrived.

5. Disentangling issues and focusing on key points of interpretive urgency that need attention go together. In doing so, "Notes" always insists that *no reading is closed*, *or foreclosed*, another way of endorsing, and distinguishing itself from, "close reading." (Ever since poststructuralist polemics, "close reading" of New Criticism has had a bad press. A point often missed by obtuse readers is that all Theory and Theorists of worth have flourished on close reading.)

6. From the correction of typographical errors to updating the latest bibliographical record of writers most studied in our schools, the "Notes" section covers a wide range of specialist work: solution to certain textual and other genealogical puzzles; omission of textual/ editorial data; censored or bowdlerized material; errors in publication dates; imprecise attribution and adaptation; misprision arising from poor translation/ transliteration; controversial philological readings, etc.

7. At some point in his distinguished career as critic, T. S. Eliot worried that facts are valued sometimes for the wrong reasons. In his "Function of Criticism" (1923), he wrote: "Comparison and analysis … are the chief tools of the critic." Following this, we find his withering remarks on facts that swell slipshod work. "We assume, of course, that we are masters and not servants of facts," adding that "we know that the discovery of Shakespeare's laundry bills would not be of much use to us; but we must always reserve final judgment as to the futility of the research which has discovered them, in the possibility that some genius will appear who will know of a use to which to put them. Scholarship, even in its humblest forms, has its rights; we assume that we know how to use it, and how to neglect it" (75-76). In what has since been widely quoted by critics, Eliot reserved the kindest word for "any note in *Notes and Queries*, which produces a fact even of the lowest order

about a work of art [which] is a better piece of work than nine-tenths of the most pretentious critical journalism, in journals or in books" (75). Nothing would be more soothing to the ear of cultural critics and new historicists if they realize that Eliot's point is well taken.

8. Some more on Philological Notes as precept and practice. Who, or what, is a *philologue*? One who is atomistic in their approach to words in which they trust because they believe that words have *lives*. (What moods are to an emotional being are the pressures of circumstances to societies that circulate words.) The lives of words also move and pass like ours through generational and social changes. Some words, as Lear's Fool remarked, sound as though matter and impertinency are mixed in them, both when writers use them and when readers process them. A philologue might even consider an *etymon* to be iconic of a certain period, a significance that culture, or the zeitgeist, gives it. For anyone who wants evidence at hand, please look through *Keywords* by Raymond Williams, and *Mythologies* by Roland Barthes.

9. Teachers now know what to do with "Notes." They can tell pedagogical from bibliographical/ interpretive/ corrective notes. Now the "Teaching Notes." The best samples for these, one could collect from *The Radical Teacher* pages. The titular pun of "Teaching Notes" is intended to amuse teachers who know that *teaching* is a tricky gerund understood as a participle. Are these *Notes* teaching us, or are they teachers' notes *for* the classroom, now being published? In any case, the exercise of writing a note not longer than 2 to 3 pages is good for a Writing and Revision course. Especially in the post-COVID 19, STEM-dominant era, we learn with our students about paragraphs and précis, what a trim and tidy summary can do in the place of diffuse and distended essays. Surely, there is something to be said for close-*writing* even if we could on principle doubt the value of "close reading."

10. Now the most riddling question: What is considered acceptable, wholly suitable, and would pass, as "Notes"? Of course the *readers* appointed by the editorial board of the

journal concerned know what makes the cut. According to them, what is the right "fit" is rather complex to even speculate. Some editorial decisions have sometimes seemed arbitrary, even suspect, to me.[8] Many other reasons, too, but the more crucial question for us is how "Notes" is judged, *evaluated* rather, by our university's hiring and career advancement committees. No human mind can yet quantify quality and vice versa without inviting reproof from a rival. Do we go by the length of a submission (by a clothier's yard) or its research value? How it weighs (on the Tulaman portable weighing scales) in academic bulk? That is to say, we cannot start with the measures of good publications before we have defined them: length, substance, evidence of critical intelligence, application in pedagogics, wide acceptance and concurrence of results/ findings on offer, track-record/ reputation of the journal or its publishing house …. To begin with, exclusive and total reliance on metrics/numbers/ impact factor of any paper, long or short, is to put the reward-cart before the work-horse. What gets elided in whoring after sheer metrics and numbers, and sometimes the renown of a publisher, is the intrinsic *quality* and *worth* of a publication. As for the *impact* so called of a published piece in the Humanities, we cannot immediately, indisputably, settle it. Its diachronic impact, I believe, is certainly greater than its synchronic attention in the prompt listing it receives perfunctorily in a cumulative annual index.

11. How short is your 'short'? Is it, to borrow an ugly business phrase, "a minimum viable product"? The kind of note that tells us just the gist and pith of a crux, citing the absolutely unavoidable texts for them to make instantaneous sense and convince us that our reading game, after all, is worth the note's explicatory candle? Again, if the "readers" (those consultants whose words the editors trust) allow a few more words and space, the note-writer must oblige.

12. Finally, a rather weird thought. We seem to have an ingrained belief in anything *short* to be fine and finished. *To the point* is literal in our imagination so much that the space allotted to

such objects, action, or activity should be small. It is perhaps the same mental logic that designs a kitchen in a palatial house or large flat where there is just about space for two (women?) to work at the same time. Transfer that design of the working space to "Notes." To put a further spin on this metaphor, think of the *alazon* versus the *eiron* in classical Aristophenian comedy. These types come in pairs. While the *alazon* is hopelessly loquacious, the *eiron* is quite thoughtfully laconic. "Notes" had better be like the *eiron* who has given us the words "irony" and "ironic." The frugal "Notes" is still an art English research had better learn to master.

Notes

[1] "Notes" in this article refers to the idea, form, and the species of publication in literary periodicals of scholarship. I treat it therefore as a singular noun. By and large it refers to the body of scholarly comments shorter than long articles.

[2] Since cultural antiquarianism unites both anthropologists and literary/linguistic critics, we need to recall a periodical published by the Pitts Rivers Museum called *Notes & Queries on Anthropology* (1874 – 1951). The PR Museum is part of Oxford University whose publishing house brings out our *N & Q*. The objective of the Museum notes was to guide both field workers and general travellers. The latter, the journal hoped, might bring curious objects and unnoticed details of strange terrains to anthropological attention. See, "Rethinking Pitts-Rivers." https://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/article-index/12-articles/703-pitt-rivers-and-notes-and-queries.html. Downloaded 25 February 2024.

A related publication, virtually unknown to scholars of Humanities today, originated in Allahabad's Pioneer Press: *North Indian Notes & Queries: A Monthly Periodical* (?1890 onward), random numbers of which are available at: https://archive.org/details/northindiannote00unkngoog/page/n8/mode/2up. This is not quite a "literary critical" magazine, but how

could one say that one devoted to publishing "authentic notes and scraps" regarding the Indian subcontinent of the XIX century carried nothing "literary" at all?

[3] The philological notes are often distinguished from *explication de texte*, the kind of reading that attends to formal effects such as style, imagery, rhythmic pattern, and meaning that help readers understand/ appreciate unintelligible or artfully tricky literary passages. For samples, consult the journal of short articles called *The Explicator*, once the most favoured haunt of teachers who believed in the formalist principles of literary criticism, especially, New Criticism. Philological notes sometimes explicate passages better by invoking parallels or sources of certain details which readers tend to overlook in hasty reading. Calvert Watkins's short article called "What is Philology?" ends by capturing the spirit of this term/ method by recalling its definition given by his teacher Roman Jacobson, who probably got it from *his* teacher: "Philology is the art of reading slowly" (25). "Notes," explicatory or philological, derives its strength from this precept and example.

[4] https://www.oed.com/dictionary/note_n2?tab=meaning_and_use#34263184 Downloaded 25 February 2024.

[5] "Journal History: About the Journal." https://academic-oup-com-uohyd.knimbus.com/nq/pages/Journal_history?login=false Downloaded 10 March 2024. On the same page, we find the magazine's motto: "When found, make of NOTE of it." Finding scholarly nuggets indispensable for teaching, editing, and/ or swelling an interpretive cause is a habit hard to resist for scholar-teachers, and having found any such, publishing them for the benefit of their community is a compulsion many of them find harder to overcome.

[6] For a quick sampling of the types, please look through the back-numbers of the *Review of English Studies* from the 1920s through the 1950s when it used to publish under "Notes and Observations" many short exchanges between scholars and reviewers on interpretive cruxes, discussion of points of factual errors relating to attribution, dates of publications and composition of canonical

works, etc. How a better understanding of a concept/ word enriches philological debate between serious scholars is evidenced in such occasional columns as "Notes, Documents, and Critical Comment" of the earlier numbers of the *PMLA*.

[7] In a series of articles called "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" in *The New Age* (1911 – 1912), Pound began with "A Rather Dull Introduction" where he said: "I mean, merely, a method not of common practice, a method not yet clearly or consciously formulated, a method which has been intermittently used by all good scholars since the beginning of scholarship, the method of Luminous Detail, a method most vigorously hostile to the prevailing mode of today — that is, the method of multitudinous detail, and to the method of yesterday, the method of sentiment and generalisation. The latter is too inexact and the former too cumbersome to be of much use to the normal man wishing to live mentally active."

[8] I ought to mention here that I have been fortunate to work with very good readers/ editors and copy-editors of my "Notes." While the seasoned referees of "Notes" are quick to see the point of a submission, the ones who miss the point insist that a note had better provide a brisk bibliographical survey and set the scene before their argument takes off. Given the short space of "Notes," this compliance with the practice of citing all relevant earlier publications to date is unrealistic. Attention to existing scholarship on a given topic is certainly an indicator of thorough research. However, missing the small tree of an all-important argument among the woods of old scholarship is a problem the note-writer will have to deal with. A little imaginative care, and clever phrasing footnoted to optimal perfection, work in most cases, but the editors help with their suggestions.

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ANISUR RAHMAN

IN T.S. ELIOT'S CLASSROOM: MY STUDENTS AND ME

Hai apne Khaanvaade mei.n apnaa hii shor Mir
Bulbul bhii ik hii boltaa hotaa hai ghar ke biich

It's my own outcry, Mir, my own renown in my household
There is a single bulbul ever to chirp in a household
(Mir Taqi Mir)

Prologue

I don't want to liken T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) to Mir Taqi Mir (1723-1810), or Mir Taqi Mir to T. S. Eliot, because they share little except that, like all canonical poets, both wrote their ages unlike others and their ages wrote themselves against their names unlike any. But I do want to turn to the inimitable W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) for a moment who had already published some of his peculiarly complex and powerful poems while Eliot was still gaining ground with the publication of his "Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock" in 1915. Even though both wrote alongside each other towards the later phases of their lives, it was Eliot who enamoured us and not Yeats. For us, the blue-eyed English literature students in the late 1960s and early 70s, Eliot's "Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock" was *the* poem that appealed to our adolescent imagination. Like disenchanted lovers, we found our alter ego in Prufrock, howsoever wronged we must have been in making our choice. So, we accepted Eliot as our ideal poet, joined his class as his students and never tired of him. This was before we discovered a *guru* in him who fed us with his ideas on classic, tradition, objective corelative, disassociation of sensibility, three voices of poetry, workshop criticism, lemon squeezer school of

criticism *et al*. Our affair with Eliot started this way and went a long way in a meandering manner, as the years rolled by.

Reading *The Waste Land*

The 1960s and 70s were not the decades in India when anyone questioned why we studied the literature of the colonisers or even their language. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's 1972 advocacy "On the Abolition of English Department" was a strong but fanciful expostulation and remains so, for good or bad reasons, till this day. In fact, those were the decades when American literature had been introduced in the universities as a result of the American policy of literary expansionism which had led to the establishment of American Studies Research Centre in Hyderabad in 1964 and liberal funding to young scholars like us to pursue our research at that centre. Based in a small town of Bihar and studying at a college that was established in 1899 and had been modelled after Balliol College, Oxford University, we carried our hearts on our sleeves and argued fervently that we must study the poet-critic-playwright T. S. Eliot on whom both the United Kingdom and the United States of America laid their legitimate claims of ownership.

Our aspirations to study Eliot got a fillip when our department offered a special paper exclusively devoted to Eliot at the postgraduate level. By opting for this paper, we got an open and exclusive right to be on the rolls in Eliot's classroom and draw upon the largess of his state brilliantly constituted of his poetry, criticism and plays. Walking through these literary domains, we started getting closer to him as a modernist poet, a new critic, a poetic playwright, a social critic and broadly as "a classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and Anglo-Catholic in Religion". My professor under whose supervision I worked for my doctoral dissertation later, had himself worked on the *Four Quartets* of Eliot for his doctoral degree in an American University and published his work in England. He became my guiding light and taught me *The Waste Land* that kept me academically engaged for all the years that followed. This kinship of the keenest kind with this text ultimately took me to engage

with it, rather than teach it in traditional ways, to my postgraduate students in the subsequent years for much over a decade.

So, studying *The Waste Land* broadly at the mid-century of its publication, that is, during the late 1960s and early 70s during our postgraduate days, was an entirely different kind of experience than studying "Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock" during the graduation days. While our romance with the earlier poem remained unfazed, we started realising that we had hit upon a ground that was hard enough to walk smoothly. There were many impediments in approaching the poem. First, we came to know that this poem had received harsh reviews at its publication first in the British journal, *Criterion*, in October 1922 and then in the American journal, *The Dial*, in the following month. It was promptly condemned in reviews as "a crossword puzzle" and then much more devastatingly as "a spurious exercise in verbal algebra". Second, it was much too baffling for us to negotiate with the fact that Eliot had to write notes to his poem as the poem had completely mystified his readers. Third, it was so much puzzling to know further that Ezra Pound, whom Eliot had very wisely chosen to acknowledge as a "better craftsman" (*il miglior fabro*) rather than "a better poet", in an act of political correctness, had chosen to conduct several caesarean sections on the poem without any hesitation. He went to the extreme extent by chopping off the fourth movement of the poem "Death by Water" from ninety-two lines to mere ten lines which made us wary of Pound as much as of Eliot himself. Finally, looking at *The Waste Land Facsimile* (1971) we were simply dumbfounded. We wondered if there was a lesson here about how a poem should or should not be written. We asked ourselves rather despairingly if this poem had any merit, and if the treatment meted out to Eliot, or his poem, signified anything about the act of writing itself. Even while both Eliot and his poem kept us constantly preoccupied, we did not abandon them, not even Pound who kept us baffled, but charged as well, with healthy curiosity. We assured ourselves that there was something very different about the poem which we were unable to apprehend yet. In this mixed state of doubt and self-assurance, we continued travelling with the poem to see if we could arrive somewhere.

Endless conversations amongst ourselves outside the classroom and notes hurriedly taken during the teaching of this poem helped us, but we still looked up to critics for decoding the poem. There were at least six major critics and annotators of Eliot to look up to. They included F. O. Mattheisen (*The Achievement of T. S. Eliot: An Essay on the Nature of Poetry,* 1940), Elizabeth Drew (*T. S. Eliot: The Design of His Poetry,* 1949), Helen Gardner (*The Art of T. S. Eliot*, 1949), Grover C. Smith (*T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning*, 1956), B. C. Southam (*A Students Guide to the Selected Poems of T. S. Eliot,* 1968) and Hugh Kenner (*The Invisible T. S. Eliot*, 1969). Their books figured in the university library catalogue but most often they remained absent from the shelves. Both the faculty and the students were in the queue waiting for their turn to issue one or the other of these simply titled but significant studies on the most complex poet of that time. We continued with our unending engagement with the poem till we all wrote our modern poetry paper in the final year examination and attempted our answers to the questions on *The Waste Land*, howsoever pedestrian they might have been. We had, however, the pride that we did not leave the question on the poem unanswered.

With the passage of time, we parted and went into different directions and pursued different vocations in life. Some of us who chose to be academics, continued visiting and revisiting the poem as this was one poem which we had carried over as an imperishable "work of art" for whatever we could make of it. My own preoccupation with the poem continued with better justification when I joined as a university faculty. It must have been an act of courage on my part to opt for teaching this poem and an act of graciousness on the part of the department's chair to trust a fresh entrant with his audacious choice. This is where the second phase of my engagement with *The Waste Land* began and continued for the better part of my career as a faculty member.

Teaching *The Waste Land*

With the change of my role from a student to a teacher-facilitator of *The Waste Land*, it did not take me long to realise that I must shift my position and replace my romantic fascination with

critical interrogation of the poem. While I engaged with this idea, I also had at the back of my mind some of Eliot's own critical observations which I thought might help me towards my understanding his poem. I recalled what he had written about the three voices of poetry. He had proposed that while the first voice was the poet's own voice addressing himself or nobody, the second voice was the poet's own voice addressing an audience large or small, and the third voice was that of the poet himself who attempted to create a dramatic character speaking in verse which he could not speak in his own person, but only through one imaginary character addressing another imaginary character. As I pondered over his view, I found that Eliot spoke in the second and the third voice which was so very appropriate for this poem but I also realised that there was much more to the poem than simply this much.

It must have been an act of discovering a natural corollary in yet another idea of Eliot when I was reminded next of his "Tradition and the Individual Talent". He had argued there that honest criticism and sensitive appreciation were not aimed at the poet but at poetry. This helped me think why Eliot, with all the aura around him, should not be prioritised over his poem. After all, New Criticism too had projected text as autotelic and independent of its author. Also, not far away, was the Lawrencian dictum of never trusting the teller but the tale itself which led me closer to the poem than the poet, who had so far been idealised as the voice of the century in spite of W. B. Yeats being there. This took me in a different direction and brought me to Jean Paul Sartre's essay, "Why I Write" which I happened to teach at some point of time. Sartre had engaged there with the dynamics of author-reader relationship. He had suggested that the author and the reader trusted each other, they depended on each other, and made demands upon each other. But most importantly, Sartre had made a philosophical point that the author-reader relationship was indeed "a pact of generosity". These insights gave me some inkling into the methods of identifying the voice of the poet, his poetry and the author-reader relationship which I considered generic to my approach to *The Waste Land.*

As students of literature, we have been witnesses to critical ideas travelling back and forth and shaking hands in unexpected ways. While balancing my position among these ideas, my response to the poem kept altering at a certain pace with every succeeding batch of students I taught. In fact, I started teaching myself, rather than teaching my students, that *The Waste Land* was a complex phenomenon, that the poet had to be kept away from the poem and that the text and reader were at the forefront now, instead of the poet. Eliot's grand lesson still held its value for me that the poet's mind was the shred of platinum and the more perfect the artist would be the more separate in him would the man who suffered and the mind which created. This apart, I was also aware that the curricular complexion had started changing and new ways of studying literature had started appealing to me and my students better than before. I now came close to questioning if Eliot was deliberately trying to write a poem of a different kind. Was he consciously trying to distil scholarship into poetry, I wondered. I asked of myself if he was willingly trying to cultivate obscurity in poetry that was once a matter of reading and enjoying. I seriously speculated if there was a design in creating fissures not only in the text but also in the form. I often came to realise that Eliot was in complicity with Pound when he accepted his drastic revisions as both of them agreed that modern poetry must be obscurely suggestive, if at all, and seemingly formless, if nothing else. In pondering over these questions, I came to affirm that this poem asked for a new reader who needed to grow out of the age-old notions of poetry and poets. Indeed, Eliot was trying to create meaning out of meaninglessness, and a form out of formlessness. He seemed to suggest that since the role of both poetry and poet had to change, the role of the reader too must change.

With time, my teaching of *The Waste Land* started growing both critically and theoretically informed. The earlier critics of the poet were surely of use but there were others who helped decipher the text differently. By drawing upon Barthes, I learnt to privilege language and the structure of writing over the author since the author had already been theoretically pronounced dead. Interestingly, this thesis also found its echo in Foucault who

negated the identity of the author as a historical person and believed in the configuration of history beyond the structures of language. So, here was *The Waste Land* for me that configured history beyond the structures of language.

Let me add here that in his "Theory of the Text" and "From Work to Text", Barthes had laid emphasis upon the plurality of the text and the extension of one into many other texts which gave it an intertextual character. This helped substantially towards approaching Eliot's text. A text to Barthes was a multidimensional space where different kinds of writing blended and clashed together and, further, a text was a "tissue of quotations" that came from different centres of culture. This was an exercise in re-writing that went on endlessly. He had given precedence to text over the author as it was the language that was a repository of a supposed message rather than the author who was only a medium. Barthes had also considered text either as "readerly" or "writerly" by which he meant that the readerly text was a given text in which the reader remained a passive recipient while in the writerly text the reader was an active participant, a decoder of the text, so to say. Furthermore, being different from "work" which has a physical form, a "text" for him was a linguistic manifestation with a structure that struck a balance between language that constitutes a text, and receiver that constitutes a reader. The text was thus a manifestation of multiple signifiers. These ideas were helpful in reading *The Waste Land* at the turn of a century. This aligned further with Derrida's idea that text overspilled the margin and the binding of the book; it embodied the trace of the other text(s) with certain difference, and bore the burden of arbitrariness, absences and deferments as language ever remained unstable. To Derrida, text was not "a finished corpus of writing" but a complex network of traces. Both Barthes and Derrida had marked a keen relationship between language and text and underlined the instability of both language and meaning. This appeared convincing and enabling enough to approach *The Waste Land.*

In addition to these, I could problematise further the idea of the author-reader nexus. The Structuralists had argued that it

was the narrative that created its reader, and that the reader was thus a construction, an implied entity, who was created by the author, and was not a real reader. This corresponded with the construction of the implied author by the real author within the body of the text who carried forward the narrative to the reader. This brought me to Barthes who had posited the reader with a unique strength in proclaiming that the birth of the reader was only at the cost the author. These discourses on author, text and reader provided me further the bases for the reading of Eliot's text.

The Waste Land has remained a text of immense engagement even after a hundred years of its publication. It is a single text of multiple texts, a text of texts so to say, that is written, spoken and performative, and is built around signs and symbols which constitute its essential content. Harking back to the past poetics, it could be read in terms of relative signs of subjectivity as F. R. Leavis had suggested. Drawing upon the parameters developed later, it could also be read with reference to non-relative signs as Barthes had proposed. Although both Barthesian and Leavisite modes of reading afforded two different modes of approaching a complex text like *The Waste Land* but they were marked by their partial approach to linguistic signs. Since language, text and linguistic signifiers are relative, none of these held the ultimate key to the poem individually and independently. I came to confirm that this was a kind of text that interrogated the text itself. It questioned the unity of form, and the established literary culture. It relegated to the background the idea of perfection and beauty in a literary product, and rejected the role of imagination to construct a literary artefact. Even though it might sound prescriptive, I found it worthwhile to approach *The Waste Land* through the linguistic and the unconscious elements that create a text and that too through the formal elements of its structure. I could also approach it as a product of a culture, as a testimony to the evolution of a genre, and as a reconfiguration of historical context. What Yeats had said about things falling apart, centre's inability to hold, loosening of anarchy upon the world and the drowning of innocence, Eliot constructed in 433 lines in five movements of *The Waste Land*. At the end, it turned out to

be a conglomeration of archetypes and myths and has stayed back as a polyphonic text of absolute value. The *baazaar* of theory is crammed with new wares. Those who stay still in the *mofussils* of critical habitats and yet wish to appreciate *The Waste Land* for all its value today, need to enter the magical metropolis of epistemologies relating to the philosophy of language, text, author and reader.

Listening to *The Waste Land*

My engagement with *The Waste Land* has been one of reading it in parts, as also in whole. It has also been one of reading it in silence, as also with punctuated eloquence. In both the ways, the poem opened up to me as a tangled yarn of multiple narratives put together in a certain order of five internal movements. It also appealed as a complex composition of myriad sounds creating a musical condition. This was so much true of Eliot's poems but not so true of the poems of his contemporaries. His earlier poem, "Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock" had a scheme of sounds which appealed to me for what Eliot termed elsewhere, in a different context, as "auditory imagination". It was also because the poem had a deep romantic ring about it and I could easily memorise many of its lines with pleasure. No less was this true of "The Hollow Men", "Ash-Wednesday", "Choruses from 'The Rock' and "Four Quartets". The poem that appealed to me the most was, however, *The Waste Land* itself which produced its own auditory impact and configured layers of implicational meaning that I could possibly identify. The most fascinating experience was that of listening to this poem as a musical narrative with rise and fall of dramatic voices. These voices came from the hinterlands of history just as ancestral voices came to Kubla from far off lands. I brought my practice of reading and listening to this poem to the classroom where my students read it in their own voices. Each voice, different from the other, had its own reverberations. So, we could have multiple versions of a single poem. Single voice renditions, as also choric renditions, produced multiple kinds of musicality that inflamed our imagination. Even if they were not trained in music, my students discovered how musical and textual assonances and dissonances composed a design of sounds, and

through that the design of meaning in the poem. It was a joy to render and listen to the poem as a musical ensemble where the amateurish ears could mark the melodic harmony. The merits of rhythm, tone and tune evolved in the process of these experimental readings in the classroom. As a group, we could thus listen to the multiple voices emerging from the poem and creating a design of meaning. Here are some examples from the first movement of the poem, "The Burial of the Dead" that may be rendered with tonal variations to create a monologic and dialogic pattern of meaning:

Summer surprised us coming over the Stanbergersee
With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,
And went on in the sunlight, into the Hofgarten
And drank coffee and talked for an hour

***

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say or guess, for you now only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water.

***

'You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
They called me the hyacinth girl.'
--Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing
Looking into the heart of the light, the silence.

***

Here, said she,
Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor
(Those are pearls that were his eyes, Look!)
***
Stetson!
'You were with me in the ships at Mylae!
'That corpse you planted last year in your garden
'Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
'Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?

Loud reading of the poem brought alive many of the implied voices like those of Ovid and Virgil, Dante and Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine and Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton; Webster and Middleton, Bible and Buddha, St. Augustine and Brihdaranayak *Upanishad*. These voices came from multiple locations – Thebes and Leman, Carthage and Thames, Jerusalem and Athens, Alexandria and Vienna, Margate and Moorgate, Highbury and Richmond and -- merged into a conglomeration of voices. They emerged from multiple personae – Phlebas and Philomela, pub's bartender and Mrs. Porter, the typist girl and a small house agent's clerk, sea gulls and Ganga, demons and gods, Tereus and Hieronimo. The poem in this reading-listening act acquired its different halo from the one realised in simple textual reading. *The Waste Land*, thus, turned into a habitat of resounding and soft voices, of echoes and reverberations. It lived in psychedelic and hallucinogenic spaces unlike any other poem ever written and read in this manner.

This experiment of reading-listening took me to yet another method of understanding this poem. I chose to render the last movement of the poem "What the Thunder Said" into my mother tongue. I did this to see if the poem spoke to me as profoundly as it did in English and if it carried the tones of voice special to the English language. I found it to my great pleasure that the Urdu version/translation brought a different rhythm and

cosmos of meaning for me and my Urdu readers. This was like discovering *The Waste Land* yet once more.

Epilogue

Once a student put a very searching question to me. He referred to a certain critic who had said that the wind that blows in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is typically European. He asked me as to what kind wind blows in *The Waste Land*? I praised his spirit of inquiry and answered with some kind of an evasive confidence that it is not wind but both gale and zephyr that blow through the poem. It is a lungful of a poem; it breathes gently now, now heavily through histories of locations and geographies of mind.

I once thought that "Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock" was a poetic creation for adolescent readers, *The Waste Land* a queer construction for the mature adults, and *Four Quartets* a subliminal configuration for those who had gone grey. One may argue against this proposition, but may not probably deny the complex of catastrophes Eliot constructed through these poems in three different phases of his career and invited his readers to witness his world. Isn't it so much like Mir who did the same and asked of his reader his attention:

Darhamii haal kii saarii hai mire diva.n mei.n
Sair kar tuu bhii ye majmuu'a pareshaanii kaa

The dissensions of my time are writ large in my diivaa.n all over
Come for a tour you too; here's is a world of dissensions all over

---

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AMINA KISHORE

TRANSFERENCE OF MODE-RENDERED LITERATURE: ISSUES OF 'VOICE AND 'ORALITY'

Abstract

Voice is the abstract, albeit essential, characteristic of a poem or a creative passage. On the page, it is bound by the boundaries of the written form. But it palpitates with the contained rhythm of the spoken word. This paper proposes to examine the hypothesis that the written form of the word is only an alternate form of presentation of the spoken word. It will perhaps be difficult to sideline the very significant standpoints of two great thinkers in the field of poetics of language; i.e. Saussure and Derrida. Derrida held Sassure's emphasis on the spoken dimension of language at the cost of the visual dimension. For him and the school of deconstructionists, the very term 'text' or 'discourse' denotes the written aspect of the text. In this paper, the view is taken that the spoken 'text' is the original 'text'. Any text is meant to be rendered, in the oral form, as the oral medium alone can convey the 'voice' of the poet or the author.

Keywords: Voice, thought, orality, language, literature

Most literature was initially oral; literature as we know it is the consequence of the oral tradition. Writing is subsequent to speech. It describes or imitates and reproduces the subsumed orality of the text, and gets represented in the written model. Be it a poem or a story we can easily agree that in its earliest original manifestation it is oral. Written language fashions itself to suit the oral original.

Writing is a more considered exercise with will and effort going into its production. One can say that writing is essentially a translation of the spoken word. A poem is nothing but a transcript of the piece that is visualized and rendered.

The mental Image is visualized in a language of subsumed orality, or let us say, thought is translated in an oral avatar. This oral version may remain unarticulated. It becomes overtly manifest only as and when it is rendered for the benefit of a listener. The intended audience for such a rendering can be visualized as a single listener or a group of addressees. When it is not rendered/articulated for an intended audience, one may say that it is oral still in an introverted sense. In other words, whether articulated or not, a poem contains an implicit sense of an audience. This sense of an audience is one of the most significant features of the oral text.

To reiterate, the written text is merely a transcription or translation of the original text, which is actually an orally rendered text. The oral text finds permanence when transcribed in the written form. What happens when oral forms are transcribed? The written text formalizes many of the oral features.

According to Canetti Elias, the author of the written text struggles to approximate the original text, that is, the oral narrative. Firstly, the original oral text becomes subjected to adaptations: For example, the constraints of the grammar of the 'received' language impinge upon the orality of the original. The major challenge of transferring the oral text into the written mode is that the signs of orality have to be preserved even while ensuring that the text is acceptable as per conventions of written languages. The original text, when it is rendered into writing, gains a 'presence', a material shape and permanence; and that is the reason for continual transfer of the oral into the written. [An idea worth trying out is, does every oral text aspire to find permanence through transference into the written mode?]

Orality is restricted by time; writing is not. In the oral format, the product is transient. It may be spontaneous, impromptu, or unpremeditated, whereas much consideration goes into writing. Rendering the oral into the written is complex

because the grammar, the written form, the genre and the style will have to be carefully chosen so as to fit the transference from the oral to the written and make it acceptable. The written text's claim to perfection depends on how close an approximation it achieves to the oral text.

Usually, an oral text is considered lesser than the written text. The Romans said, "Verbo Volant, scripta manent" (Spoken words fly away, written ones remain). Oral texts can be preserved when they are transcribed into the written form. This preservation involves effort and careful composition, and as such gives validity to the written document. The spontaneity of the spoken word is formalized and edited when transferred to the written mode. (LOGOS Multi Lingual Translation "Types of Portal; Chapter16 Text"). Technology offers alternate methods of permanence for the orally rendered text. [Idea: Perhaps comparisons can be set up between the response of a 'listener' of a text rendered orally (preferably by the author; and the printed version of the same text when it is subject to evaluation or response by a 'reader'. Is the reader reaching out to 'hear' the voice in the text? Is the reader's own reading/interpreting voice performing any 'over-writing' onto the original oral text?]

Traditional narratives like fairy tales, scriptural texts, old songs, lullabies etc., when written down, demand an approximation of the written word to the spontaneity and patterned nature of the spoken model. In other words, the author is pressurized to bring in the natural tone and structure of oral speech into the written format. Any author who is subject to the anxiety of the written word fails to move beyond notions of correctness and then the oral Speech Acts built in to the narrative becomes bogged down by artificiality. The register of the written text is different from that of the oral text. In order to achieve realism, the transcriber of an oral narrative has to strike a fine balance between the mimetic and the diegetic modes. The narrative which goes to the hand of the reader has to show as well as tell. The plain mimetic text can become cryptic and burdensome unless a certain amount of telling (diegesis) is added

on to explain, and enfold the reader in a 'hear while you read' state of mind.

From Oral to Written

What we conventionally accept as the literature text is a combination of many modes of oral expression. Most of the written versions of literary forms are actually meant to be heard or seen. Stories and poems have to be narrated/recited. Plays have to be shown/performed. Literature, if we define it as a creative art, is essentially a performed art form. In other words, the full realization of a literary text is when it is 'rendered'. Even a diary or a letter and an Essay are essentially speech acts, addressed to another, an audience. The human voice has to intervene in a real or implied manner, in order to bring out the essence of these forms. Even in closet plays, or literary plays, the action has to be imagined and 'heard' as 'voices' expressing the words. Of course, literature can be a non-performance experience also in the sense that a person can 'read', experience, and respond to a literary text all by one-self. Even in such a one-to-one approach to a literary text, there is an implicit 'dialogue' between the reader and the text. Every creative work, whether oral or written, cutting across genres, is a communication that a writer is trying to establish with her/his readers.

The Reader

Implicitly, the reader is hearing a voice addressing him/her; and she/he is responding to the voice(s) of the text. When a text is presented, the fluid orality becomes enriched continually with changing/changeable sense due to the fluidity of lexical choice and range of meaning. When the reader reads from a written text, this fluidity becomes superscripted by orthography and the formality of grammatical structure and other conventions of the written mode. Thus, the flow gets constricted. Writing obliterates, or tampers with, and overrules imagination. The reader of this written model must try and free it from its orthographic chains so that the written word can spring back to the spontaneity of orality and its tonal rhythms.

Rendering

Story telling was a respected profession in civilized societies. Story tellers were known for their expertise in memorizing classics, legends, moral fables through hearsay, from each other; and often this process went on down many generations. Styles of memorization were honed and perfected. Some examples from India are Jata Patha, Dhwaja Patha, Ghana Patha. Eka Santa Grahis and Hafiz e Quran are to this day admired and honored. This tradition and respect for the oral discourse and oral rendering has kept the flag of the oral tradition alive even after civilization paved the way for the less ephemeral graphic mode (engravings, clay tablets, carvings in stone – figurative as well as written code). An important phase, no doubt, in the history of development of literacy. But the damage to the oral mode!!

Translation, subtitling, scripting, dubbing on TV or Film, cartoon or animated versions of classics etc are all modern examples of mode-transference. In other words they translate an original into other modes. We must guard against the dangers of the 'original' (obviously an orally oriented source text) getting affected by the dominant tone used by the translator. In folk tales or fairy stories, for example, a literary translation or transference may destroy the unique orality of the original. The features of fairy tales, scriptural renderings and traditional narrations possess unique features of narration. These features need to be maintained in re-tellings, both oral and written. When we read a fairy tale in printed text, or see it in animated or feature film versions, and if we find them quite effective with all features of oral narrative intact, it means that the orality of the fairy tale has been successfully transferred to the written text

Mode Transference

When the writer transcribes the imagined oral discourse into the written form, he faces two problems. As a transcriber the writer has to remain faithful to the oral discourse patterns like incomplete utterances, time shifts, mixing of registers etc. The reconstruction of an oral ambience is uppermost in the mind of the writer. The writer has to render an oral discourse into writing; and in doing so, he tries to concretize an abstraction of the

imaginative mind, groping for a suitable expression to give a meaningful shape to, let us say, intangible sensibilities. The illogic and irrationality of the oral text, the unexpected time shifts (as in a dream) are presented in a verbal discourse pattern by adding logical connections, explanations and annotations. This shows the self-consciousness of the transcriber about the volatile nature of the oral text; and about the gap between the oral and written discourse. Actually, the transference of the oral mode to the written is a challenge. The challenge is to translate and yet maintain the individual idioms of the oral and the written modes, truly a "triumph of orality!"

When the oral text is translated/ transcribed into the written mode, the oral effects are radically diminished. Writers try to preserve the oral effect through various devices. The features of orality in written texts are enumerated by Peter France in "Literature as Translation of Oral Mode to Written Language" (2000). One can extend the approach of Peter France and come to an understanding of how the transference is managed. The onomatopoeic phonic features of speech are translated through images; the multiple voices in oral texts are represented in the written text through many transference strategies like dialog, leading phrases (like 'She shrugged and said', or 'There was a tremor in her voice as she spoke' etc), stage directions etc. The pace of normal speech is represented through collocations, and phrases. Gestures which are the meaning making markers in oral communications are represented in the written text through comment, or oblique reference and implicit remarks (as in My Last Duchess). Apart from this, orally sounded emphasis and nuances etc are presented through repetition; action is often depicted in a literary text through description. Various techniques like page layout or arrangement of letters and words in some unique style are also significant strategies. Interruption in speech and nuances of double meaning, ironic overtone etc are usually denoted in writing through techniques like caesura, dashes and other punctuation markers, break in sentences, inverted grammar etc. The fluency and pitch of human speech cannot be properly indicated in written forms unless the writer takes recourse to para

-linguistic features like exotically presented phrases, collocations, or sudden changes in font sizes and styles.

The more direct and self-conscious strategy of this shift is to use descriptive passages which help in denoting shifts of mood and locale. It must be reiterated that oral speech acts are gesture–supported; and they are aural in their primary presentation. The written representation of the speech acts on the other hand is bound to rely heavily on formal use of language, because of which writing may appear to lean towards verbosity and redundancy. While conducting transference of mode from the oral to the written, in a bid to reduce the risk of changing or diminishing the impact of the original oral text, orthographic features like case, font, paratactics, punctuations, layouts etc are used. Even the choice of the form depends on how the writer perceives the oral original and which literary form will suit the ethos of the original piece.

Harvard University has a long tradition of research in oral literature. While studying Homer, Milman Parry (1925-28) was struck by the elements of oral tradition in the very mechanisms of literary language that distinguish literature from common discourse. Parry believes that a style such as that of Homer must not only be traditional, but it must also be oral. His research led him to the Hypothesis that the Iliad and Odyssey were not originally literary at all, but rather the products of an archaic Greek Oral tradition. His Oral Theory is considered to be a great advancement in classical studies. His findings established that "literature began in Europe with the writing down of an oral tradition". Oral literature pertains to societies with no (or negligible) language of their own.

These societies may be in possession of a rich tradition of oral literature. The advent of the written word led to the devaluation of the oral word. Now there is an attempt to bring orality back into focus. It is certainly established that speech is not an oral reproduction of the written word. The reality is the other way round. Literacy (if it is defined as the ability to read and write), forms only a tiny percentage of man's total creative achievement. Spoken word is the ultimate pinnacle of the

sophistication of human race. Once the spoken word dies out, the writing culture will also be negatively affected. The poetic mode of speech may be recorded in writing but writing cannot reproduce the beauty and rhythm of human speech. It can only approximate it. With technological advancement, human speech and voice are now being recorded for posterity. The term Oral literature is an Oxymoron. To clear this difficulty Ugandan scholar Pio Zirrimu (2011) coined the term 'Orature'. Lore is another term used by Nobel Laureate Elias Canetti (1981) that includes oral, written as well as performed forms of expression.

Sustaining the Oral

We should consider ways of supporting and maintaining the oral word. The relationship between orality, literature and technology needs to be understood. In their work "From Oral Literature to Technauriture: What is in a Name?" Kaschula, Russell and Andre Moster (2011) speak about the role of technology in bridging the gap between orality and writing. In literate societies, oral tradition is maintained as urban legends, folklore, paremiography, bedtime stories, jokes, oral poetry and performance poetry etc. When the oral text is transcribed into the written form, the writer is faced with the difficulty of how to incorporate oral elements and speech acts like musical interludes, shouts, yodels, sobs, exclamations etc. This is very difficult without some editorial intervention. So, the writer finds it necessary to appear on the printed page and use support clauses like, I heard, he said, she said, he flicked his robe, she tossed her head etc. Thus, the original feature of orality becomes affected by encapsulation inwriting. It is being increasingly called upon for technology to act as the intermediary and make transference 'render-able'.

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HARISH NARANG

WE ARE NOT CHINESE AND WE DON'T EAT BATS: REVISITING GLOBALIZATION DIASPORA AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

Abstract

This paper is divided into three parts. In the first part, I discuss the phenomenon of identity formation of individuals as members of communities through the acquisition of various kinds of markers—racial, environment-bestowed and those transmitted societally and culturally. In the second part, I discuss the creation of the diaspora situation and the impact of new identity formations on individuals as well as groups of people. In this section I also discuss the impact of the process of globalization on immigrant identity. In the last part of the paper, I discuss how the 9/11 and related events have once again put the question of identity of immigrants into the balance. This I do by referring to a few incidents involving immigrants of Indian origin in the U.S.A. and the U.K.

Key words: identity, assimilation, race, cultural plurality

However, before I begin with a discussion about the identity formation, a few words are in order about the immediate provocation for the writing of this discourse.

The Covid-19 pandemic which gripped the globe a couple of years ago put the phenomenon of migration into the balance once again- like it had done when 9/11 happened. The migrants, as we know have always behaved like the janus-faced: while looking at their present in the host nation, they have-simultaneously- glanced backwards at the country of their origin,

maintaining close ties with family and friends back home. All this got snapped suddenly and totally what with the complete shutting down of all travel facilities and even disruption of communication facilities during the pandemic. The news of deaths and destruction filtering in and out- from there and from here-created a situation paranoid enough to rethink if the migration was worth at all.

Add to this, the paranoia among the original inhabitants, blaming the immigrants and their life style for bringing upon them this massive destruction of lives after speculations began to circulate that non-Europeans and non-whites were responsible for the spread of the virus. Persons of East Asian origin, particularly the Chinese, were suddenly the fall guys because it was alleged that the virus originated in China where people ate- among others- bats the habit which transferred the virus to humans. They were forced to offer explanations to all and sundry in situations which could be even life-threatening. It was the same thing with the Muslims after the 9/11 tragic events in the U.S.A.

It is this that motivated me to revisit the phenomenon of migration and identity in the context of globalization.

Identity formation, we know, is a very complex phenomenon. Some identity markers are given biologically, that is these are racial and ethnic in character: pigmentation, colour of eyes, texture of hair and shapes of noses. Thus, fair skins, blue eyes, curly hair and small flat noses are connected with various races and ethnic groups. Running into individual members of ethnic groups through the operation of complex generic processes, these are the most stable of identity markers and consequently most difficult to shed or change individually or communally. Even when some of these come to be stereotyped negatively, these cannot be got rid of easily. Women with natural blonde hair, for instance, have been associated with dumbness—most unfairly, of course—spawning a whole industry of jokes around them but they have not been able to do much about it—that is the prejudice against them. Similarly, most communities have constructed myth and fables eulogizing their own racial features while running down those of others. However, modern research in genetics

promises to change even these markers with the distinct possibility of made-to-order biological features.

Some other identity markers are gifts of the environment to members of particular communities. Innuits, for instance, unlike their other fellow Canadians, can reportedly divide the phenomenon of snowing into at least six distinct categories primarily because snow is what they have all around them—all the time. My mother once told me of a community of cattle search specialists in the rural Panjab of her childhood—now in Pakistan— who could trace stolen cattle hundreds of miles away from the scene of the crime and beyond canals and similar water bodies by following simply the foot-marks of the cattle. And this despite, my mother added, the thieves mixing the stolen cattle in their own large herds. This they could achieve because they were a community of cattle breeders themselves and had learned to distinguish each individual cattle by its pug-marks.

Though stable, these gifts of environment bestowed as identity markers to members of specific communities have in most case lost their relevance with changing patterns and pace of life. However, such markers do bestow certain qualities in abstraction—sharpness of observation, for instance—which in turn become the distinguishing features of those communities as well as their individual members. Marwari community, for example, originated in the desert of Rajasthan which was traditionally not only a land of deficiency but where the means of transportation and communication were quite scarce. As a result, the community learned to save and build reserves from really meager resources. Marwari diaspora, now spread all around the world, is renowned today for building huge business empires out of very small beginnings, thanks to this environmentally dictated trait of theirs. The progress made by Gujarati 'dukawallas' in various parts of Africa in the beginning of the last century that gave even European traders a run for their money is a manifestation of similar identity markers.

Most numerous—and most significant, perhaps—are the identity markers that are cultural in character. These involve language and religious beliefs, customs and rituals, forms of

address and modes of inter-personal behaviour, dress codes and food habits, form and content of education, songs and stories, symbols and icons, myths and legends, practices for preserving history and tradition and many similar things. Add to these, modes of production, economic, political and societal organization, professional and philosophical preferences and we have the complete cultural identity map of communities and individuals.

This last category of cultural identity markers enumerated above is relatively unstable and it is the members from this category that come under various degrees of pressure for change in situations of globalism and diaspora.

II

The phenomena of globalism and diaspora have been around since ancient times and these is sufficient evidence to show that people travelled, traded and settled down away from home among people with distinctly different cultural profiles. The existence of the ancient silk route in our parts of the world is one such evidence. However, the biggest diaspora situation was created through the most shameful act in human history when millions of people from different parts of Africa were forcibly taken away in most inhuman conditions to develop the Americas. Diaspora situations were also created in a big way with the advent of colonialism when the colonial powers moved large chunks of native population from already colonized places to develop newer colonies. This is how a large section of Indian population from various parts of the country—Panjab, Uttar Pradesh, Gujrat, Tamil Nadu, to name only a few—were taken away—through guile or force—to develop British colonies in South and South East Asia, East and South Africa, Mauritius, Canada, the Caribbeans and South America. As a result, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Mauritius, South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Canada, Trinidad and Tobago, Fiji and Surinam boast of big Indian diaspora going back to the middle of nineteenth century.

Later, uneven development in most of these colonies and elsewhere also under the system of capitalism also led large scale migration of population from the underdeveloped world to the so-called first world in search of better economic prospects. Thus, more Indian groups of people, for instance, have moved to the U.K., U.S.A, Canada, Germany, Australia and New Zealand in recent times, creating in the process, newer diaspora.

In a typical situation of diaspora—that is when members of a community from a nation go away—the factors necessitating this could be either 'pull' or 'push' or both, the reasons could range from political persecution to highly paid jobs in reputed multinationals—one of the first adjustments that the newly arrived must make is to acquire a new identity, almost immediately although they are still carrying their old one on their persons and in their minds. Thus, they become hybrids from the word go when they give up some of the original cultural identity markers and acquire corresponding category of markers from the mainstream of the society they are migrating into. These denote, in a way, the cultural visa stamp for entry into the society. Some of these tokens, the immigrants are ready to shed easily and without much fuss while there are some others that they give up only reluctantly and there are still some more that they want to keep as long as they can. This last category includes customs and rituals relating to religious practices, ceremonies relating to birth, rite de passage, marriage and death. All this is done by the people in the situation of 'crossing over' as Edward Said calls it, to integrate themselves to the new social and human environment although giving up the comfort and certainty of one's original identity could be a painful affair.

Let me illustrate what I have said by taking the example of a sample token of identity. Dress-code, for instance, is one of the first such identity marker that people in diaspora situations shed quite easily, replacing it with dress-code of the recipient society. I vividly remember feeling quite amused when I first saw the pictures of first batch of Indian migrants to Canada—members of the rustic, uneducated farming community from Panjab— at the beginning of the twentieth century. Dressed in three-piece suits

and ties, the chains of their pocket watches attached appropriately to their button holes, clutching walking sticks with metal handles and roaming the market streets of Vancouver and Victoria, they looked quite cartoonish to me. But then they wanted to make an impression on their fellow white Canadians of their being 'gentleman like. The speed and readiness with which immigrant women from India—even those belonging to conservative, middle-class families—shed their sarees and salwar-kameez to don European 'dresses' or stop using bindi and sindoor—identity markers of married status of women—are all signs of the same desire to assimilate. Not only dress but language too is an easy prey to such 'identitarian' politics, to borrow another expression from Said. The alacrity with which Gujrati immigrants to East Africa—those 'banyani dukawallas' as they were called—picked up 'Jambo' and "Karibu Sana' as the greeting words in Swahili and the efforts that even highly educated Indian immigrants to the U.S.A. put into learning the American 'accent' highlight the same desire to hybridize.

There are, however, a large number of cultural tokens that 'diaspora people'—if I am allowed to use that expression—are forced to shed under pressure—social, economic and cultural—from the recipient society. Many of these relate to hygiene and sanitation, public practice of religious rituals and inter-personal behaviour. Rohinton Mistry—a renowned Canadian writer of Indian origin—has a story—imitating reality, of course—wherein an immigrant to Canada cannot adjust himself to using the western commode seat in the toilet and decided to come back, forsaking all. Indians, as we know, are very tactile people, that is we express so much through touch—solace, for instance—which is sexuality neutral. However, with the wider acceptance of same-sex intimacies in the first world, many an Indian has landed himself in embarrassing situations or has invited caustic comments like 'I am not that kind of person' while putting his hand around the shoulder of a male colleague or friend very routinely, meaning 'nothing'. Many early immigrants to England when seeking to rent residential accommodation found it very difficult to comply with the conditions that they would not cook

Indian food on the premises since strong-smelling Indian spices were offensive to the olfactory systems of the Europeans.

Whatever the form and content of compromise on the question of cultural identity, the objective has, however, always been to assimilate and homogenize under the hegemony of the mainstream. And all this because members of immigrant communities have always been perceived—rationally or irrationally—to be a threat to the local population who, then, put pressure on the administration to disallow the creation of diaspora or make it difficult for more immigrants to come in. The condition of continuous passage from the port of embarkation put by the Federal Canadian government on Indian migrants defied any norms of logic and yet it remained in place well after the tragedy of Komagata Maru in 1913. Similarly, all immigrants to Canada during the early years of twentieth century were made to sign a declaration that they would not demand the right to vote which continued to be denied to them until 1947. In colonial Kenya, Indian immigrants were not allowed to buy land in the coveted rift valley regions declared as 'white highlands', nor were they allowed to grow cash crops like tea and coffee. Similar unfair trade practices were imposed on Indian traders in South Africa where white shopkeepers went to the ludicrous extent of advertising the lettuce on their shops as 'Europe grown lettuce', implying thereby that the one sold on Indian shops was perhaps diseased or infected.

Under pressure to somehow stay on, immigrants accepted all kinds of conditions full of blackmail and humiliation, developing in the process a janus-faced hybrid personality with some identity markers making him look back homewards while others—accepted either voluntarily or under hegemony—made him stare in the opposite direction— at the face of his present. It is here that one finds it very difficult to agree with Edward Said according to whom an immigrant enjoys the experience of 'instability' and 'surprise' and the 'juxtapositional double perspective.

However, as the diaspora stabilises and its individual members sink their roots—particularly economic roots—deeper

into the soil, they seek to reverse both the blackmail and the humiliation by raising the demands for the restoration of some of their surrendered tokens of identity. Many of them, for instance, begin to flaunt their cultural identity by celebrating publicly their festivals, organizing their food-fests, dressing up in their community/national dresses and publishing literature in their own languages. They also link up with other immigrants or minority groups and communities, organize joint activities and submit joint memoranda of demands, thereby putting pressure on the mainstream to give them their share in the cultural and political pie. This is how, for instance, Indian immigrants won the right for their children to learn their languages in schools even when these are not part of the official curriculum. Similarly, by making a common cause with not only other immigrant groups but also by bringing in other minority groups like the gays and lesbians under an umbrella organization like Des Pardes—a cultural organization floated initially by South Asian immigrants in Canada—the Indian diaspora in Canada has won substantial cultural concessions, including substantial state grants for bringing out publications—journals, magazines and books—in various Indian languages Panjabi, Gujrati and Urdu. In fact, the adoption of multiculturalism as the national policy of Canada in the early seventies can be attributed to such efforts.

This process of tolerance of the diaspora, received a big boost when the first world devised the process of globalization to take advantage of the cheap labour force of the developing world as also to integrate the huge, ever-expanding markets of the developing world into their for maximizing their profits into order to overcome the recession that had begun to stare the capitalist world hard in its face during the eighties and the nineties of the last century. As immigration laws were liberalized to let cheap labour—this time more skilled one—migrate to nations of Europe and North America, there were also deliberate efforts to ease the pressure on assimilation and homogenization of the new immigrants. Right kinds of noises began to be made in different quarters including cultural research departments of universities recognizing the need and advantages of plurality in various fields of life. Suddenly, an immigrant's was not the ugly face of the

nation. As visible tokens of political empowerment, some immigrants were bequeathed titles, invited to formal functions, elected to legislatures, appointed ministers and in an odd case or two even provincial prime ministers. Diaspora was no more a dirty word.

III

And then 9/11 happened. And it changed the world, more particularly, the world of the immigrant to the first world. I discuss below a few events that happened in the wake of the tragic events of 9th September 2001 in the U.S.A. These events have had a never before impact on the immigrant identity question.

First of these events relates to the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 events in the U.S.A. wherein a Sikh petrol station owner was killed during the violent attacks on Asian and Arab ethnic minorities by white Americans. It was reported that because of his long beard and the headgear, he was mistaken to be a follower of Osama Bin Laden whose pictures flashed a thousand times on the television screens and newspaper front pages since the morning of September 11th showed him sporting a long beard and a headgear. The Sikhs, as we know, are enjoined upon by their religion not to shave off or trim the hair on their heads and faces as also to keep their heads covered with a particular kind of headgear called a *pagri.* Thus, the Sikh gentleman who was killed apparently for his long beard and for keeping his head covered was only observing the identity markers ordained by his religious practice—no more, no less. Ironically, there are no such religious restrictions upon the followers of Islam.

To me, the most significant question arising out of this tragic happening is not whether the attackers were so stupid that they thought all followers of Osama Bin Laden to be his look alike or that they could not distinguish between a Sikh and a Muslim or between one kind of headgear or another. To me the most significant question is: Were there no long beard sporting Americans of European descent who also sport a headgear? If so, why weren't they attacked? The answer lies elsewhere. It lies in the cultural identity markers that immigrants or people in diaspora situation refuse to shed and which stand in the way of their being assimilated and homogenized fully in

the so-called mainstream culture. These markers are like the proverbial sore thumbs that stand out as a challenge to the 'hegemonizing centre' and seek to subvert the 'logic identity', to borrow a couple of phrases from Edward Said.

The second event I am going to refer to is even more bizarre. We know that the paranoia spawned by 9/11 events led to a plethora of security measures being put in place to prevent the recurrence of such happenings. One such measure was the posting of sky marshals in flights to nip the terrorists 'in the bud' as it were. It led to strange situations like the one in which a passenger on a domestic flight within the U.S.A. happened to utter the word terrorist during a conversation which got reported to the captain of the flight who returned to the takeoff airport and had the passenger arrested by the F.B.I. But in the event, I am going to relate, even the act of uttering was not involved. Once again, in a domestic flight within the U.S.A. the sky marshals pounced upon a white passenger who was sizzled apparently and was being a nuisance to his fellow passengers in his neighborhood. They handcuffed him and shifted him a vacant seat in the business class next to which were seated an Indian doctor—Dr. Rajkoomar—and his wife. The sky marshals settled down in the nearby seats and tried to control the errant passenger through verbal and physical abuse. A massage was sent to ground control and as soon as the plane landed, F.B.I. agents stormed the aircraft and took away the white handcuffed passenger and also Dr. Rajkoomar whom they handcuffed too. The consternation and vociferous protests by other passengers and Dr. Koomar's wife that Dr. Rajkoomar had nothing to do with the accused and his behaviour were completely ignored. The wife was not informed as to where her husband was being taken and under what charges. After he had been led away, one of sky marshals offered a possible explanation: 'He saw too much.' So the crime of the Indian passenger was that he had seen the sky marshals assault the accused passenger –verbally as well as physically and could have been a potential witness in case of a court case.

My observation is the following: there were scores of other passengers who witnessed the same behaviour of the sky

marshals? Then why pick on Dr. Rajkoomar? The only possible explanation lies, once again, in his ethnic identity markers which were different from those of other passengers of European descent.

The last incident I wish to refer to involves a news item reported on the BBC television channel a few weeks ago wherein it was stated that four white police persons had been dismissed from service in the U.K. They were accused of being 'racists' in their attitudes and dismissed summarily. In a clip shown together with the news item, one of the police persons in question was captured on the camera—clandestinely, of course—saying to another person 'A Paki is a Paki, no matter where he is born'.

'Paki' as we know, is a racist term used by white English persons to denote not just persons of Pakistani origin but all South Asians—Indians, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis if not Sri Lankans and Nepalese as well.

The comment, to me, is a very telling revelation of the attitude and the mindset of some white British—and also of other persons of the European ethnic stock elsewhere—towards persons from the third world and of non-European descent who are in the unstable situation of diaspora. The message is loud and clear: there is no hope for even the succeeding generations of immigrants who, unlike their parents, are actually born and brought up in the U.K.—or the U.S.A., for that matter—and who are either British or American citizens by their birth rights. What is more significant is the fact that these immigrants of the next generation are also closer to the mainstream culturally, having been a part of the same system of education, speaking the same language in a similar accent, having similar dress codes and food habits and having similar hopes and fears, similar aspirations and trepidations as members of what Edward Said calls the 'imposing centre'.

To conclude, it had taken many a century and a thousand devices on the part of immigrants from the developing world to obtain acceptance in the recipient developed world. A number of prejudices against their identities had become diluted due to the diligence and hard work, low profiles and submissive stance and suo motto sacrifices to give up crucial identity markers on the part

of immigrants. The onset of the phenomenon of globalization set in motion by the first world not because of any heart-change but because of a well thought out plan to exploit the cheap labour force from the developing nations as also to exploit their huge markets, extended further this tolerance of difference in cultural identity by not insisting upon substantial assimilation and homogenization.

However, as the events enumerated above show clearly, the tragic events of 9/11 have brought the old politics of identification –to borrow a phrase from Said once again—back to square one and in a form far graver and sinister than ever before. While in the past, Indian immigrants, for instance, were damned for being 'coolies from Calcutta', for being 'polygamous Panjabis' and for being Hindus who 'covered their dead bodies with butter', the post 9/11 politics of identity involves a far sinister equation—terrorist=fundamentalist=any follower of Islam=any member of a non-European ethnic origin. How else do you explain as to what happened in the U.S.A. last year with the sudden arrest, handcuffing, photographing and public parading before being sent to jail, of scores of Indian IT specialists at their work place, in the presence of their colleagues—seniors as well as subordinates. And, these were no illegal immigrant loonies but hardcore professionals with valid work permits and correct forms of visas and who were working for reputed firms and companies whose records of employing immigrants were transparent, legal and above board.

So much for globalization and acceptance of cultural plurality!

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NANDINI BHATTACHARYA

TRANSLATING GENRES, TRANSMITTING ROMANCE: MICHAEL MADHUSUDAN DUTT AND NINETEENTH CENTURY LITERARY COSMOPOLITANISM

Abstract:

The essay looks back at the polymath Madhusudan Dutt 200 years after his death through the lens of translation. Dutt is remarkable for having introduced several genres into Indian English and Bengali by complexly transposing Greco Roman texts via the frame and filter of English Augustan cultural transferences. It examines *Birangana Kabya* as a remarkable cultural transposition of Ovidian forms into modern Indian vernacular.

Keywords: Madhusudan Dutt; translation; cultural transferences; *Birangana Kabya*; classical Europe; modern Indian vernacular

The essay maps Michael Madhusudan Dutt's a) ushering in Indian-English as a new expressive medium in colonial India, and b) the revivification of Bengali as modern "cosmopolitan vernacular" (Kaviraj 503-566) with particular foregrounding of the romantic love ideal. This ushering involved a complex and simultaneous engagement with English, the European classical languages (Greek and Latin), Indian classical languages Sanskrit (and Persian), and modern Indian vernaculars, that is Bengali, Tamil and Telegu, in Madhusudan's case. The most effective trope that explains this complex engagement is that of translation. Dutt's works appear cosmopolitan as they are perpetually in a translated zone.

I pay the greatest attention to the fact that Dutt returned to India to take up jobs as a (*dobhashi*) translator, the most distinct being his position as a translator-clerk in Alipore police court under the jurisdiction of Kishorichand Mitra (Basu, 45-52). If one adds to this his mythic multi-lingual skills (Persian, Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Italian, French, English, Bengali, Telegu, Tamil) Madhusudan appears to be perennially 'within translation zones.' Mention of a seminal text whose translation involved risks, but for which he has not been formally acknowledged might just nail my case. Purnachandra Chattopadhaya's (novelist Bankimchandra Chattopadhaya's brother) essay, entitled "*Bankimchandra O Dinabandhu*" (originally published in the journal *Bharati*) testifies to Madhusudan being the actual translator of Dinabandhu Mitra's sensational Bengali play -*Nil Darpan* into English. Purnachandra's testimony regarding the translator's name is inadvertent, as his intention is to record for posterity, the uproar over the publication and translation of the 'seditious' *Nil Darpan Or The Indigo Planting Mirror.*

A Perennial Movement between Languages, Cultures, Genres

This essay (in effect) argues against the prevalent theory of ruptures, the narrative of Dutt's contrite return from a pursuit of inauthentic anglicism to his cultural roots, and the subsequent whole -hearted dedication of his artistic powers to the creation of Bengali language texts post J.E.D. Bethune's advice to that effect as Madhusudan continues to create and think creatively in English, even as he writes in Bengali.

Madhusudan is credited with translation of *Ratnabali* (from Sriharsha's original Sanskrit text into English via his reading of Ramratna Tarkanarayan's Bengali translation of the play. Dutt translated *Sharmistha Natak* into English from his own Bengali composition. He translated parts of *Tillottoma-sambhab Kabya* from Bengali into English, and *Hektor Badh Kabya* from Greek *Iliad* to Bengali being some examples. I will be speaking in greater detail about the translational dimensions of *Birangana Kabya,* as much critical ink has already been spilt on exploring the more popular, *Meghnadbadh Kabya.*

The translational imperatives of his English works, numerous short poems, *The Captive Ladie*, the play *Rizia: The Empress of Inde,* require the space of an entire monograph. I will however broach the subject of Madhusudan Dutt as the inceptor of Indian English writing alongside his predecessors such as Henry Derozio, and as consciously using the critical tools of annotation, editorial framing, notes, that are specific to translation initiatives.

Rabindranath Tagore has noted that, one of the qualities that makes any literature modern, is its *anubadjogyata*, its translatability, its transcultural qualities. Madhusudan's radical experimenting with hitherto-unexperienced cultural forms, through conjoining and fusions, *frissons* by which the world is brought into Bengali- Indian, and Bengali-Indian to the world- makes him the true inceptor of *sahitye adhunikata* (literary modernity, cultural contemporaneity to literature) in Bengal and India. This genealogy of *adhunikata* in Bengali literature was one that Bankimchandra Chattopadhay and Rabindranath Tagore subsequently informed and that Buddhadev Basu subsequently theorized. Dutt 'worlded' Bengali by augmenting its *anubadjogyata* (its translatability); its culturally syncretic quality. While such literary efforts were largely a matter of individual talent, they were also born of a desire to carve out a literary tradition in response to growing ethno-nationalist pride.

"A foreign air about the thing:" Madhusudan Dutt's English Writing as Translation of Indological Preoccupations, of British Romanticism

Michael Madhusudan (and the anglicized title, Dutt), is that perfect example of the postcolonial being, hybridized, between languages, cultures, homes[1], faith-systems[2]. European (Anglophone) cultures came to him as a colonial legacy-burden, in the particularity of that charged Hindu College ambience, where a Henry Derozio had aroused Romantic sensibilities through his teaching and poetry, and a Captain David Lestor Richardson (1801-1865) mesmerized students with renderings of Shakespearean plays (Dasgupta, 16-26). Such frank Anglophilia and Dutt's imbibing of British Romanticism through Derozio

involved absorbing a legacy of orientalized themes, and a utopian nationalism. This untitled sonnet quoted below, written by Madhusudan as student at Hindu College and published in the Felix Carey edited journal- *Literary Gleaner* (1842)- bridges these two strains of British Romanticism- a yearning for the unachievable and a celebration of the spirit of liberty, of a vibrant proto-nationalism:

> Oft like a sad bird I sigh/to leave this land, though my own land it be/its green robed meads-gay flowers and cloudless sky/though passing fair, have but few charms for me/For I have dreamed of climes more bright free/where virtue dwells and heaven born liberty/makes e'en the lowest happy-where the eye/doth sicken not to see man bend his knee/ to sordid interest/[…]/where man in all his truest glory lives/[…] /for those fair climes I heave with impatient sigh/there let me live and there let me die (Dutt, Gupta edited, *Madhusudan Rachanabali* "Poem 8" 408).

Dutt imagined "the Albion's shore" (and European literature), those "clime[s] more bright" are not so much real places as representing a heroic cultural authenticity, a release from that 'dreadful secondariness' of colonized existence. Dutt's impossible desire to reconcile gaps between his origins (Bengali-Indian) and be feted-canonized as a British European writer renders him as the foremost among a line of 'mimic men' from Henry Derozio, Chinua Achebe, Derek Walcott, V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, to Abdul Razzak Gurnah. Like them, he appeared tragically inadequate, his works falling between the expressive stools of pristine 'native' purity and 'heroic' European authenticity. Again, like those illustrious 'dislocated' writers that preceded or followed him, Dutt finally recognized that rich seam of cultural indeterminacy, inbetweeness and ways to render such spaces radiantly productive.

Such recognition did not come, as many have imagined (Murshid being foremost), in terms of ruptures, through the rejection of one culture (the British European) over the Bengali-

Sanskritic. Dutt appears to encourage such binarization, this narrative of return to roots in sonnets such as "*He Banga taba bhandare bibidha ratan*" (Oh Banga, your store has many gems) and by reverting to write almost entirely in Bengali in his mature period. Bethune's withering letter (in response to Dutt's *The Captive Ladie*) that Dutt (and other 'natives') should inhabit within and write in their mother-tongue languages is also touted as the reason for Dutt's sad realization and return of the prodigal. Dutt however (contrary to popular perceptions) continued to operate within that remarkably productive zone of cultural inbetweeness, receiving cultural texts, rehistoricizing them, reconstituting genres, introducing thematic assemblages, and enriching that cosmopolitan world of the nineteenth- century Europe, while ushering in literary modernity in Bengal.

In a letter to Gourdas Basak in 1858, Dutt admits that his kind of writing will have […] "in all likelihood […] something of a foreign air about them." But "if the language be not ungrammatical, if the thoughts be just and glowing, the plot interesting, the characters well maintained" Dutt argues, why should one "care if there be a foreign air about the thing?" He underscores this cosmopolitan, transnational quality of British Romanticism, and for that matter European Romanticism, its preoccupations with the world and its literatures in an age of imperial expansion and availability of acute translational tools. So just as Goethe, and German intellectuals were fascinated by Indological scholarship and William Jones' translation of *Shakuntala*, so are the British and the Anglophile Indian readers are fascinated by Thomaas Moore's poetry because "it is full of Orientalism." Does such a reader reject "Byron's poetry for its Asiatic air? Carlyle's prose for its Germanism?, Dutt inquires. The answer is an emphatic 'no.'

Besides Dutt notes that he is "writing for that portion of [his countrymen […] whose minds have been imbued with Western ideas and modes of thinking[...] (Dutt "Letter no. 49, Mid July, 1858 in Murshid "An Outburst of creativity" *Heart, 104-5*). Dutt forged of an early Indian English literature, and a peculiarly hybridized, polyvalent cultural space alongside early

writers ranging from Henry Vivian Derozio, Toru Dutt, Shashi Chunder Dutt, Manmohun Ghosh to Sarojini Naidu. All these writers struggled to find a creative locus, often internalizing the oriental gaze of British Romantic writers, and their writings receiving, amplifying the concerns of British Romantic writers, Shelley, Byron and Thomas Moore, and Walter Scott. They struggled to inhabit descriptions as various as East -Indian[3], Indo-Anglian, Eurasian, Anglo-Indian writers. Their confusion was illustrative of the first contact between disparate and asymmetric cultures, but such confusions were also productive of a new kind of language and aspirations. It was productive of the difficult passage of genres and thematic patterns[4].

Dutt's importance lies in being one of the earliest and significant Indian English writers that received and amplified British Romantic cultural ideals. Such reception expressed itself in mellifluent use of English language and effusive poetic yearnings for the unattainable goals. Celebrating liberty-principles and proto nationalist desires were part of these expressive goals. Dutt like other Indian Romantics (Derozio being the most obvious influence and resonating board) tended to see India through European lenses and thus doubly exoticize their own surroundings and people. Dutt's poems were published in the pages of periodicals such as the *Literary Gleaner, Calcutta Literary Gazette*, *Bengal Herald*, *Oriental Magazine*, and the *Comet* in Calcutta, and later, *General Chronicle*, *Athenaeum, Spectator*, *Madras Hindu Chronicle, Madras Circulator* in Madras His poem *Vision* (published in *Madras Circulator*) and then a longer version, *Visions of the Past* that was later published under the title *Captive Ladie.* He composed a complete story-poem of two cantos and a complete poem drama while in Madras and it was published in 1849. Dutt's two significant works, *The Captive Ladie* (a narrative poem in two cantos) and *Rizia: The Empress of Inde* can be studied as exemplifying all these issues. Both these works, like many of Dutt's later writings such as *Hektor badh*, were works- in- progress as Dutt continued to add cantos or sections to them, and these had an unfinished air about them.

The Captive Ladie (the story of King Prithviraj's heroic abduction of Sanjukta) and *Rizia*[5] are framed by epigraphic quotations from Byron and Moore's poetry and give off an air of inbetweeness, "foreignness" as they continue to translate and annotate themselves. Consider Dutt's epigraphic note and use of Orientalized turns of phrases "Raj-sooiya-Jugnum" translated as "feast of victory" and Bhat as "the Indian Troubadour" only heighten this effect. The following note is also typical of British Indologists such as William Jones, F. Max Mueller, Charles Wilkins, and Monier Monier- Williams, and their tendency to thickly annotate their translation of Indic material. In endnote (f), Dutt's *The Captive Ladie* translates,

> [t]he Feast of victory or as, it is called in Sanscrit the "Raj-Shooio Jugnum" is described at great lengths in the Second Book of the far-famed "Mohabharut" […] The celebration of this Feast was an assertion of Universal Supremacy […] (Dutt, in Gupta, 509).

In endnote (o) informs that "the ancient warriors of Hindustan" challenge their enemies "by blowing conch shells" and whose "Sanscrit is 'Sancha-dhunnee' ." Endnote {p) describes Seeta as the "Indian Helen" and endnote (h) directs readers' attemtion to the originator of such translation, annotation methods, that is William Jones' 'Preface' to his "Sacontala.[6]" (Dutt, "notes on Canto1," *The Captive Lady,* Gupta, 509)

Madhusudan and *Birangana Kabya*: Translating Desire in Modern Bengali

An interesting expression of this complex and simultaneous engagement with European classical languages, its receptions in Bengali is to be found in letters to his friends. In a revealing letter to Gourdas Basak, (while in Versailles in France) Madhusudan gestures at triangulation- the bouncing off languages-cultures against each other for rich contrapuntal resonances. He asserts that "the knowledge of a great European language is like the acquisition of a vast and well cultivated estate." Madhusudan fondly hoped to familiarize [his] educated friends with those languages through the medium of [their] own" should he live to

return from his sojourn in Europe, in the same letter. "After all" […] notes Dutt, "there is nothing like cultivating and enriching our own tongue" and that if there be anyone amongst them "anxious to leave a name behind him and not pass away into oblivion like a brute" such a person should "devote himself to his mother tongue […]." "European scholarship is good" only in as much as it renders Indians "masters of [their] intellectual resources of the most civilized quarters of the globe." However, when one "speak[s] to the world, let [that person] speak in our own language" (Dutt, Murshid eds, *Heart*, "Letter no. 112" from Versailles,26th Jan 1856, 241).

Relatively less attention has been paid to British Romanticism's engagement with the romantic desire, and women's voices in romantic relationships and Madhusudan's imbibing of that thematic strain in his writings. Madhusudan's works ranging from *The Captive Ladie*, *Rizia*: *the Empress of Inde*, *Shermistha*, *Ratnavali* (in English) and *Birangana Kabya*, (in Bengali) also stems from a conscious decision to etch mythical women- lovers and their love stories. It issues from Dutt's broader cultural engagement with British Orientalism and Indology's conceptual framing of Aryanism, Sanskrit literature, and romantic love. Madhusudan's personal interaction with Theodore Goldstueker (a prominent Indologist, and professor of Sanskrit in Oxford,1821-1872) while studying Law at Gray's Inn was so fruitful that Goldstueker offered him an honorary position of teacher of Indian vernaculars in Oxford, but one that Madhusudan could not take up given his financial crises while he was in Europe.

The frenetic engagement with the 'woman ideal' within a broad 'Aryan' framework is another point to be noted while reading *The Captive Ladie, Sermistha*, *Ratnavali*, and *Birangana*. The word 'Aryan' came to mean many things to many people but fitted cosily within a new patriarchy's discursive structures of an Indic variety of companionate marriage. The intelligent, emancipated but resilient and loyal woman was a preferred cultural type. And this cultural type had to be grounded in the 'Hindu' classics. This conflation of Sanskrit/ Hindu/Indian/ Aryan

was that poisoned fruit which Madhusudan had also tasted. Literary representations of Shakuntala-Dushyanta, Damayanti-Nala, Savitri-Satyavan, Sharmistha-Yayati narratives were meant to forge a genealogy of women exemplars for this newly imagined relation between men and women. The conceptual matrix of romantic love, between a *udasin* (distant, careless, disengaged) man and a virtuous, steadfast, enduring woman who is finally rewarded with union with her beloved; or with a culturally glorified willing self-destruction, were attempts at accommodating Sanskritic gender ideals within British Victorian ones. Fortunately, both were intensely patriarchal, and one didn't have to try too hard to fit one within another. What *Shermishtha*, *Ratnavali* and *Birangana* achieve is to de-eroticize the heroine-figures (subverting the original Sanskrit delineation-intent thereby); and infusing such stories with suitable middle-classing effect Madhusudan was overwhelmed by the idea of romantic love, as were many English-read Indian youth of the times (Raychaudhuri, *Perceptions, Emotions*, Ray *Tracing Emotional History)*. Romantic love and writing of letters as expression and production of subjectivities thereby, constitutes the very conceptual core of enlightenment modernity. Such love presumes individuation, personal choice and evolved gender relations. The conceptual marriage of Aryanism as a culturally superior position, and romantic love as the finest kind of man- woman relationship resulted in the prioritizing of such pairs and their 'love stories.' It does not really matter that none of these stories (derived primarily from the epic *Mahabharata*) had anything to do with woman emancipation or empowerment, and that their later renderings by Kalidasa, for example, were even more deviously implicated in patriarchal assumptions. While Goethe singled out Kalidasa's *Abhijyana Shakuntala* for its ability to combine earthly passions with heavenly commitment, Max Mueller's fondness for the *Shakuntala* narrative stemmed from its portrayal of many shades of romantic love. Translated by William Jones as *Sacontala: or the Fatal Ring, An Indian Drama*, it set the tone for many such studies of 'Aryan' women types. Mrs. Charlotte Spier's *Life in Ancient India*[7] celebrated steadfast love among several mythical pairs such as Nala-Damayanti, Shakuntala- Dushyanta and so

forth. Significantly, Spier's book is dedicated to the Indologist Horace Hayman Wilson and is a tribute to the work of the great Indological scholar Christian Lassen. Speir describes Lassen's work- *Indische Alterthumskunde*- as the inspiration for her *Life in Ancient India.*

Translating Genres; Receiving Greco Roman Classics in Bengali

Dutt's ability to bring Europe-England home and create translated modernity for Bengal is perhaps best exemplified in his *Birangana Kabya.* Adapted from Ovid's *Heroides*, Dutt's epistle poems are responsive to late eighteenth-nineteenth century English fascination with Greco-Roman classical literature in general, and Ovidian literature in particular. English fascination with Ovid's poetry, and particularly the *Heroides* has been ascribed to the emergence of greater female literacy, awareness of her subject position, the postal revolution, and greater number of women using postal services to write letters. The two most well-known eighteenth century authors, that were fascinated with the *Heroides* (love epistles of women related to heroes) were John Dryden and Alexandar Pope. While Dryden (along with Tonson) brought out an edition of Ovid's *Heroides* entitled *Ovid's Epistles translated by Several Hands* (writing a critical preface and translating several poems, 1680), Alexander Pope wrote *Eloisia to Abelard* a series of love epistles exchanged between a Eloisia a prioress to her beloved Abelard. The very tradition of epistolary love poetry received a considerable boost upsurge due to British fascination with Ovid. The very form of epistolary love stories in Richardson's novels (*Pamela or Virtue Rewarded*, *Clarissa Harlowe*) While enough evidence of Madhusudan accessing Ovid as student at the Bishop's College Calcutta can be gathered (Riddiford *Madly After the Muses*), what is fascinating is Madhusudan's abiding interest in the woman's voice, her subjectivity, the particularity of her responses in situations of romantic love. The material conditions of increased female literacy, development in postal communication technologies leading to a spike in women's letter writing practices were also responsible for a renewed interest in Ovid's *Heroides.* A desire to

explore the women's voice in romantic relationships in eighteenth and early nineteenth century England can also be ascribed to a renewed interest in Ovidian poetry.

Madhusudan did not share those material conditions prevalent in England, but was equally interested in bringing home the epistolary form that enabled the expression of a woman's voice in colonial Bengal. Madhusudan's orientalism was often refracted through the British Orientalist predilections. Madhusudan's *Birangana* too arrives through the frame and filter of English fascination with Ovid, and Ovidian experiments in English literature rather than Dutt's direct reading of Ovid. Ovidian epistles of *Heroides* were not originally framed by prose *precis* of every epistolary narrative unit. We find such *precis* in Henry Thomas. Riley's English translation of Ovid's *Heroides* and it is possible that Madhusudan's prose epigraphic 'telling' of each of the stories of *Biranganas* before his heroines began reading their letters directly, may have owed something to such earlier British examples, rather than to Ovid mimetic 'showing.' Dutt's precis of each of the woman's stories before they directly 'present' themselves does compromise the 'project' of mimetic unmediated revelation of the suffering *biranganas*.

It is interesting that Madhusudan was fascinated by John Dryden's translation of Ovid's *Heroides* given that Dryden used the preface this translation to set forth his theories, rules for translation-metaphrase, paraphrase, and imitation[8] in Anglophone languages.

Dutt's *Birangana and Secular Life Writing in Colonial India*

The Enlightenment modern urge to etch secular 'lives'; explore their subjectivities and create a sub-genre of exemplary women's lives also illumines the *Birangana* project. The British administrator, Charles Wood's "Despatch" (1854) and its "frank and cordial" call to democratize Indian education on gendered lines, to 'redeem' Indian women from their 'demeaned condition' was accepted by the Indian *ecumene* on negotiated terms. *Birangana Kabya* must also be situated within the larger cultural revivalist moment of discovering exemplary women figures from *puranas* and epics

Etching of such a gendered genealogy, and women - figures as exemplars of a *jati*, became prevalent in the 1850s. Raja Shiva Prasad (also decorated as *sitara- e- hind* or star of India, for his services to literature) portrayed such heroic line of women in his Hindi *Vamamanoranjan* (1855) and Pearychand Mitra (Madhusudan's contemporary) wrote epistolary 'novels' *Bamatosini and Ramaranjika* with an eye to create exemplary women lives. Pearychand Mitra and Shiva Prasad had as their narrative model in Elizabeth Starling's *Noble Lives of Women* (1848)- a Victorian bestseller. In 1852 Neelmani Basak's work- *Nabanari*- with etching of seven mythical and two historical women as examples, preceded Pearychand and Shivaprasad's efforts. Ramsaday Bhattacharya's *Bamacharit* recorded 'lives' of five exemplary, non-Indian women in 1856. The very same year, Martha Soudamini Sinha wrote about lives of exemplary women. Kanailal Pain wrote *Florence Nightingale.* Gopikrishna Mishra wrote 'lives' of Indian and European women figures for the reading pleasures of young girls. In 1871 Baikauntha Das wrote *Sachitra Nariratnamala*. In 1886 Das wrote *Dwadash Nari* in which he described 12 ideal women from mythical and historical sources.

Madhusudhan's probing the psyches of mythical women (drawn from ancient Sanskrit texts) in an epistolary format, somewhat unmediated by a 'teller,' must be contrapuntally situated besides the nineteenth century Indian predilection for a diegetic charting of secular 'lives.' (Murshid, *Heart* "Letter no. 112, From Versailles, 26th January 1865," 241).

A spike in the realistic recasting of traditional (and hagiographically coloured) *charits* and *namehs* into exemplary life records of historically recognizable, or frankly mythical women-figures, was born out of a need to carve a secular genealogy for an imagined *jati*-a new ethnic-nation. Some of the names in Madhusudan's *Biranganas*-Damayanti, Jana, Shakuntala, Sharmishtha, Draupadi- are common to any of the standard list of women exemplars in Indian nineteenth- century *charit*s and *atmakathas*, even though their interventionist foci may differ. These two kinds of 'life'- explorations, deploying the

mimetic epistles and/or diegetic life narratives, enabled modern Bengali literature to embark on possibilities of complex and psychologically plausible exploration of interiorities of the human mind and especially in its gendered dimensions. Bankimchandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore's psychologically complex exploration of women's minds (unmediated by a diegetic teller), of Kundanandini in *Bishabriksha* (The Poison Tree, 1884), and Mrinal in *Streer Patra* (The Wife's Letter, 1916) owe a great deal to Madhusudan's radical exploration of the epistolary form in *Birangana Kabya*.

Notes

[1] Madhusudan was unhoused in the fundamental sense, being disinherited from parental property after conversion, cheated by his relatives, travelling from Calcutta to Madras to make a living, returning to Calcutta in a plethora of professions and places, travelling to England to study law, only to ultimately move to Versailles in France unable to afford the cost of living in England. His return to Kolkata and death in a penniless state, in a charity hospital in Beniapukur Entally, where the poorest of Christians were inhabited, is a testimony to his unaccommodated status in a transnational colonial world. See Jogindranath Basu's *Michael Madhusudan Charit* and Ghulam Murshid's *Lured by Hope: A Biography of Michael Madhusudan Dutt* translated into English from the Bengali original *Ashar chalane bhuli: Michael Madhusudaner Jibani* for more details.

[2] It is fairly apparent from his letters that Madhusudan's real reason for conversion was not any great belief in Christianity but making it a means of reaching his ideal, the Albion's shore Though converted to Christianity by Archdeacon Dealtry with a great deal of commotion and resistance offered by his father and the Hindu community, Madhusudan was acutely sensitive to the fact that he was a not a *tnyash firingi* (a mimic man) even when converted to Christianity and wearing European clothes, but a Bengali *bhadralok*. Refer to Letter number in Ghulam Murshid's edited collection of his letters *The Heart of the Rebel Poet*.

[3] Derozio described himself as East-Indian.

[4] See Rosinka Chaudhuri's excellent work *Gentlemen poets in Colonial Bengal: Emergent Nationalisms and the Orientalist Project* in this respect.

[5] *The Captive Ladie* was published in an English periodical in Madras, in 2 cantos and introduced by a poem called "Visions of the Past." The *Eurasian* (launched in 1849 as an English weekly by the owner of *Madras Advertiser*) serialized the play, *Rizia: The Empress of Inde* in seven issues from 10th November (issue number 2) to 12th January (issue number 11) 1850.

[6] See (Dutt, "Notes on Canto I," *The Captive Lady,* Khetra Gupta edited, *Madhusudan Rachanabali: Ingreji -saha Samagra Rachana ekkhande,* Calcutta: Shishu Sahitya Samsad, 1955, 509.

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NAZIA HASAN

OF PANSIES, GOSSIPS AND MEATLESS DAYS: INTERSECTIONAL RUMINATIONS ON SARA SULERI'S MEMOIR

Abstract:

Meatless Days by Sara Suleri may not be a central text in the category of South Asian Literature; it definitely draws attention for being a critique of a state in its nascent stage. Suleri celebrates the new identity and simultaneously, exposes the ideological underpinnings of the nation which stands revealed as a fiction manipulated by the power that controls the state. This memoir presents a woman's perspective in an ambitiously hyper-masculine culture- thus, culinary metaphors, so-called feminine conversations and social evaluation of gender position and politics find an appraisal. The feminine aesthetic turn of human emotions forms a confluence of feminist consciousness with the Postcolonial demeanour.

Keywords: nationalism, gender, gossip, history, silence

> I was thinking... there's never been a woman's autobiography. Nothing to compare with Rousseau... Chastity and modesty, I suppose, have been the reason" (Virginia Woolf in a letter to Ethel Smyth dated February 1940).

The memoir *Meatless Days* (1989) in study at present is written by Sara Suleri, the particular edition published in 2018 by the special Penguin Women Writers Series to celebrate the centenary of women getting the right to vote in Britain in 1918. Hearsay and whispers may usually impinge one's mind and imagination

whenever one reads and writes about a woman writer. For it reminds one of the history of women's writing which has failed to name and record a satisfactory number of them, and also that a woman daring to write had to face tales and scandals, her writings were declared soulless and invalid – made of gossips about neighbours and visitors.

Sara Suleri, the author was born and brought up in Pakistan – and her memoir traces the early decades of the newly independent nation across our borders. ***Meatless Days*** was chosen for the sake of relevance that it bears to the contemporary period, and of course, for its postcolonial aspect. Sara Suleri gained a reputation as a renowned South Asian critic and writer early in her career. Her characters almost live through what Virginia Woolf said half a century ago in the essay, *Three Guineas*, that 'women have no country' (2014, 234); Ifat – the eldest sister of Sara on a visit to her parental house only months after her love marriage declares, "men live in houses, women live in bodies" as carriers of generation in their blood and womb, as mothers, as care givers (*MD*, 136). The resounding essay entitled *A Room of One's Own* (1929) by Woolf is still relevant as is the title, 'meatless days', so much in sync with the present-day Indo-Pak situation!

As a memoir, *Meatless Days* reads like the annals of a family woven by incidents related to the narrator's childhood, her grandma, a passionate journalist as father, a White Welsh lady as mother, siblings, friends, trials and jubilations, khushi and ghamm, love and longings. The book gains in merit for the way it relates to the larger picture - placing these private life anecdotes in the context of the chequered events of a country which caused and suffered unchecked brutality, bloodbath and pogrom across the borders of India in the indelible year 1947. The bloodless birth is still a figment of imagination - and let's not miss how names change for the same event- some call it Partition, and some Independence. Our ways bifurcated at the genesis and how well it rhymes with nemesis, one notes once more! Thus, this memoir is not about women and old wives' tales only, rather it deals with paramount issues of womanhood, nationality, migration and the

human capacity to live by love and/or human vulnerability by the absence of love.

The narrator's Daadi/ grandma tells Sara the child that there was "a big fire" (02) engulfing many in 1947, including herself- and independence had done lesser than expected- it had made 'distances between' two nearby places where streets and people used to embrace each other without a barrier, she resented this change the most. Like Thamma of *The Shadow Lines* by Ghosh- partition mangled the very idea of 'coming and going'! Daadi's thin, delicate Urdu sounded queer amidst the Punjabis where she reached with her son Zia Ahmed Suleri and his wife. Migration always comes with culture shock in differing degrees even when it is just across the borders, nourished by the same land and water. Zia intoxicated by the idea of a Jinnah led *Pureland* had gone to England for political activism-journalism, and returned with a new wife- White and English who remained shy with the language the grandma knew and slept in. While Mair Jones alias Surraiya Suleri adapted everything possible to feel at home in this brand-new nation- Daadi failed in making her family members adopt the Welsh lady as their own. Once more a woman feels without a nation- a lingering, lasting deficiency. Both women found themselves alienated from the land in more than one conspicuous way as silence set in the new house, inhabited by this new guest. First wife was divorced, child Nuzhat was introduced to the new mother. Thus, Daadi becomes a metaphor of the lost land India, for she stops talking to her son as well. They communicated through letters (7) under the same roof, very much like people whose identities were changed overnight by the border in between.

In the newly germinated country, Journalist Zia Ahmad Suleri, a person 'consumed by history' (16) writes for life and writes honestly too, an ardent admirer of the Qaid-e Azam (107), the only household god permitted in a monotheist nation. The children grow up in a multicultural ambience, speaking better English than Urdu- the mother's tongue overpowers the mother-tongue. Sara complains that Daadi who had a profound delight in food, and those were the meaty days- showed reluctance toward

the children, living apart and absorbed, being impervious to 'their conversational penetration' (3) but rebuked hard if anybody tried to treat the girls with disrespect. With four girls and two boys growing up together- the house was abuzz with delightful activities and childhood pleasures of Monsoon and mangoes (36), Ramadan and Eid celebrations (28), sehri and iftaar preparations (29), fasting to feasting, sighting birds, locating pansies (139) and *nargis* (173), learning algebra, gliding through English lessons and labouring across dry Urdu grammar to soulful ghazals (79); (no wonder, Suleri's interpretation of Ghalib's ghazals are remarkably popular in the West). Papa who allowed the children to call him Pip made the dining table gatherings a site of political discussions while Mamma worked on their health by feeding them mutton dressed up as lamb, with the "parable of kapura" (22)- the goat testicles as sweetbreads- (32) life was beautiful- *zindagi gulzar thii*!

Breaking up the Peter Pan myth is mandatory, the way to growing up is paved with pain and disillusion. When Ifat and Sara get to know that the meat dishes they relish consist of unmentionable organs of sacrificed animals- the days meant for abstaining from non-vegetarian food appear to them as some "vast funeral game" (29), little Sara tries to munch on tiny raw "heads of cauliflower and radishes" imitating goats in turn(24)!

That's the beginning of Sara's scepticism towards the appearance and reality of things and events. She expresses her anguish even as an independent woman saying– "what is potato to the fork is turnip to the tongue" (27)- it causes a sense of failure, a bruising deception. But that's the trick- the scheme with everything around- the new country raised up on dreams and fancies, by the "romance of religion and populace" (14) failed to provide them security. Their residential address kept changing across divers places like Lahore, Rawalpindi, Karachi, England to Chambelpur due to fear of war. Sudden insurgency and unannounced riots; adulterated food filled the markets, the critical journalist Pip was reduced to 'a jailbird' (112), going in and out of prison by the whims of the powerful government, for the Islamic State of Pakistan had developed an intolerance for truth

and veracity! Religion became something stranger than fiction, echoing the fears of controversial Rushdie in *The Satanic Verses*, "...burn the books and trust the Book, shred the papers and hear the Word..." (210). Sara calls it the tragic "departure of Islam" (14) from Pakistan. The culinary metaphors appear instantly to Sara, she has something to offer from the kitchen larder for every kind of situation. She refers to the common people's appalled state as children being 'betrayed by food' (24).

Thus, when Sharia Laws and Nazaam-e Mustafa movement went awry – the name of Islam was maligned by every succeeding authority- losing sight of the original idea behind the birth of this nation. Every new government came up with a new constitution, every person on the President's chair re-enacted the primitive era enmity, friends and associates were house arrested, hanged, killed or assassinated. Muslim nationhood (55) was mutilated to a monstrous political pattern, people 'seduced' by history and poetry (107) found the new nation- a modern thing (111) to be 'moth eaten' (70) very much like Tillat's shaami kebab which refused to shape up in the desired way and they had to be served with an ingeniously coined name of 'Kuwaiti kebab' (37)! They were all "bed mates with betrayal" (28).

All Muslims ended up turning against each other, divided in sects and castes, freedom was lost, fundamentalism clouded the course of socio-cultural life. Sara mentions how Daadi forgot God and Papa sat glued on the prayer mat for longer hours than needed, hungering for God (15)- to the embarrassment of the children. Since they were raised up believing that "there must be something wrong if it needs so much protection" (135)- be it a political system or a boyfriend! The grownups like Pip and Brigadier Saheb called it 'trying times' (08) and the teenage Sara could see through the ruse – the trying times may lead to trial times for those in power! It may be mutton dressed up as lamb (22)! Where do women land up in such a country? Sara believes that the very concept of woman was absent from the available system, "not really part of the vocabulary" (1)' we just lived on, too busy doing things! Women were expropriated for their labour, making 'the Sisyphus Stratum' (Joseph, 147)- endlessly toiling at

the bottom of socio-economic level. They were at the receiving end of the patriarchal attitude and structure. Thus, women of all age and rank had to either obey the men of the family or keep silent, or stop talking- Mairie and Dadi were glaring examples for a teenage Sara. Even the 'civilized' (04) journalist father was incapable of feeling this lacuna. He was selfishly demanding, controlled people including his well-educated foreign beloved turned wife and mother of his children, talked instead of listening with a habit of luxurious carelessness, as Sara Suleri notes. No doubt, Ifat eloped with the golf loving army man Javed, Sara and Shahid emigrated to the West at the heavy cost of losing the company of women, Tillat's family settled in the Middle East and Mrs. Mairie expressed satisfaction over Sara's decision to leave home and explore the West (152), though Pip was too distraught to react. Life in New Haven (literal and metaphorical!) helped Sara to build a distance from her frustration and grief back home, she comments, "I was in a posture of bright askance, rising like a poppy from the fields of my recent dead" (72).

Although, the memoir discusses the socio-political situation of the nation in ample details- a reader will also find it tracing and almost rewriting an indigenous history mostly by appropriating the pre-colonial symbols and "amplifying the voices of women" which Ania Loomba considers a remarkable way of Postcolonial women to reassert their identity (222). In a very subtle way, Suleri is recovering the experience of those hidden from history involving the issues of subjectivity and agency. For agency is required even for realising and talking about one's subjective condition. Suleri's serious concern for the women around her, the way she unravels them with their personal charms and quirks asserts a recovery of presence and a history of their own which was largely unexpected in those days. The memoir fills the gaps in the meta-narrative of the nation with the help of these 'personal memories' and 'little histories' (O'Hanlon 191). Thus, Dadi and Pip become metaphors for the mother India concept and the passionate offspring called Pakistan. Mairie Jones' silent ways are questioned by Sara and Ifat, mixed with compassion and pity, empathy and furore- not to be emulated. They rather unlearn what was expected to be learnt and revered,

instead of "thinking back through their mothers" (Woolf 74). Thus, the memoir retains a deeply political sense with narratives reaching closer to the individuals and communities and sometimes it teems with a plurality of views fighting to be heard and given a space. The national politics is juxtaposed with the "occult zone where the people live" (Fanon183), privileging the personal as a site of experience and introspection. But history looms heavy on the family, and the most painful experiences are the ones where public history crosses the personal one. That weaves their lives with new grief and unprecedented sorrows. The two deaths which break the family apart prove to be part of the larger plans of the new nation heaving with renewed belief in masculine aspects of cultural and political motivations.

Pip/Papa Suleri's new country shows all those features charted out by Postcolonial theorists and interpreters. Leela Gandhi finds the colonial aftermath to be marked by "a range of ambivalent cultural moods and formations which accompany periods of transition and translation" (05). Sara Suleri notes how "Pakistan increasingly complicated the question of context..." (07), the winter war of 1971 (08) led to the birth of Bangladesh, hailed by Indira Gandhi, Bhutto became 'the first elected president' yet the 'era of trying times' prolonged (08), with a musty taste of defeat in all activities (09), a new bond of powerlessness (12). People like liberal Pip took to the prayer mats, pious ones like Dadi forgot to pray (14). Pip's children found this change "embarrassing" knowing dimly that "we were about to witness Islam's departure from the land of Pakistan...the great romance between religion and the populace..."(14) took another turn! The celebrated moment of arrival at this new stage was charged with 'the rhetoric of independence and the creative euphoria of self-invention' (Gandhi 05). Anxieties and fears of failure attend the need to satisfy the historical burden of expectation; thus, 'General Zulu presided over the Islamization' (16) of the country and made people forget about Bhutto's hanging (17) - activities and events were categorised as mentionable and unmentionable, "Pakistan felt unreliable...landscapes learned a new secretiveness...the country

grew absentminded overnight...with patches of amnesia" hanging over all (17).

Suleri also captures how the making of independent nation states after colonialism is usually chaperoned by a desire to forget the past. This will to forget is driven by a medley of cultural and political motivations. The resultant amnesia helps the people to wash away the painful memories of subordination, violence and trauma through self-invention. This also assists in disowning the burden of colonial inheritance and the disagreeable, agonizing realities of colonial encounters. Thus, the young people surrounding the author find their country changing to a chauvinist and authoritarian political nation state. It became a conformity-producing prison house for the women replicating the colonial racial consciousness to gender consciousness. The woman characters no wonder felt muffled and stifled –women of all ages, from mother to wife to daughters; that's what stands out very clearly in this significant text.

The Indo-Pak nationalist compromise with the invasive hegemony of colonial values was threatened at both material and spiritual levels. That's why, as Partha Chatterjee observes, the menfolk believed that 'the home must remain unaffected', women were not to change but carry on with the traditional roles (120). What Sara as an adolescent witnessed was a struggle between competing masculinities, the third world women suffered double colonisation and they were rendered as female custodians of spiritual domesticity as 'angel in the house' (Patmore 1854). The Victorian ideals only got reinforced in the practices of women's sexuality under male control, concept of maternity exalted and breeding a manly, fearless race of nation-state builders and saviours- these were considered and propounded as the paramount duties of a woman. Sigmund Freud's theories endorsing the appropriation of women's bodies to the heterosexual family remained popular throughout the century. Sara and Shahid wondered at Tillat becoming a "child-producing factory" (20), Ifat became a proud mother of three children within years and the English woman- their mother created an empire of white- brown beings to make her feel located. The 'civilized' Pip (04) just

forgot count of them in his hurly burly journalistic life of following deadlines and chasing publishers for his books hailing and criticising the new nation Pakistan. He was busy in wresting the previously colonized Pakistan from the "textual takeover" (Boehmer,19) by the Brits. He continued performing the act of establishing "nation-ness as a legitimate value" (Anderson 03) by writing, and raising a populated family. An ardent admirer of the Qaid-e Azam, Zia Suleri shouldered the responsibility of dismantling the rhetoric of misrepresentation around the origin of Pakistan by writing new books with reformist zeal. All the womenfolk of the family- Mairie, Sara, Tillat had to work with him at the level of typing, editing, designing and critical appreciation at every stage. Mr. Zia sums up as a sweet-bitter tyrant of inconceivably self-absorbed egotism.

This paper also tries to explore how the personal experience of history challenges the grand moments of history at times- the ones experienced and felt within familial relationships. Dave Gunning believes that the family unit held together by communal bonds and shared comprehension of the past events "require as much of forgetting as remembering" and this can be seen as "a metonymy of the national community" (2013, 159). This memoir also insists on the importance of small stories and is wary of accepting single narratives. Publicly, the small things of individual narratives are crushed by big forces of history but the family mourns for the very same things.

The anguish and the brewing turbulence are not limited to the tea time discussions or newspaper headlines. The public incidents rather bleed into this close-knit family, "the heart of this story" (Kamila S. vii). *Meatless Days* reads like a 'ghazal/ Oriental love poem, with every chapter as a sher/couplet' to Muneeza Shamsie for the way it cheers and radiates with so much affection, love and warmth among siblings, among friends, among women- that's why the sudden 'absence' of some 'imbues their life with impenetrable loss' and longing for the author (543). Sara shared a very special cordial relationship with her elder sister Ifat which she describes intensely in a totally new semantics.

"At first, I thought she was the air I breathed...Ifat had preceded me, leaving her haunting aura in all my mother's secret crevices...she lay around me like an umbilical fluid...there was so much of her inside me..." (125)

As a younger sister Sara felt that Ifat the elder one was her home, a repository of anecdotes marking life and she carried her like a lymph, like a body part (40), inseparably. She believed as if she was the part of the same egg that Ifat was born of, lying dormant for years and then forming her out of the same cells (125)- this 'golden apple' (125) love and the sunshine affection were wrenched away! Their bond with the other siblings and friends was strong, they almost made a cult society of their own which wanted to be secure, away from the political turbulence that Pip and the world outside dragged them to. There are incidents where they sit together for hours chatting, playing and teasing each other. Those were the 'moments of being' for them, where they comprehended life, people, the world through each other's mind and heart, where they learnt much more than all the books that Mamma made them read every afternoon (97).

Sara reflects on the past and realises that "we collaborated with Ifat in the most significant work of our lives" (129). She left the world embracing her with a dazzling aura, with extraordinary warmth and love- interrupted at an unexpected juncture of life. There were times in her companionship when 'gossip' became a source of learning and unlearning the essential aspects of living- gossip declared by Rukmini Bhaya Nair as "an underrated conversational medium for private criticism, ...as a meaningful literary weapon against the claims of historical truth and religious morality" (50). The family and teachers' efforts to put these younglings on "the right path" (*MD* 87) literally became a shared joke for their future life and they perceived how the notionally right path usually made people dull, unhappy and unenterprising. They earned their wisdom to know that history can be retold as domestic gossip, that metahistorical events could be used as pretext and pre-text by those in power. Their everyday experiences and playful conversations at times appear as creatively empowered to reclaim the metaphors of a meaningful

life. This spoken genre of the gossip, although betraying a taste for trivia and innocent bantering, allowed them to dive deeper into a sea of compassion and speculation.

For these growing up citizens of a country where morality was taken as a public business and a serious matter for the law makers and law imposers as ministers and rulers- these small talks helped them take morality into the private arena. The hearsays became revelatory at various levels – be it knowing about human bodies, relationship of parents and other elders, political campaigns and issues or economic crisis and cultural challenges. Though usually categorised as a womanly activity, it ushered them almost in an interventionist discourse, making imaginative connections with reality. These adolescents till the end of their lives (or the memoir in the present case) continue respecting this genre, for it provided them a new system of comprehending all important events.

As R.B. Nair claims, "when the historical documentation is too immense, one tries to make sense of events by selective juxtaposition, by partial viewing and recreation..." (56). Thus, Suleri finds an imaginative connection between the disguised food items beginning with 'kapura presented as sweetbread' with major political upheavals (21), the tenure of various cooks in her household kitchen resemble the different presidents in the parliament (33), lapse of communication between family members refer to the higher issues (07), Mamma accepting Papa's proposal for an inter-racial marriage as a form of individual expiation for a collective offence, "the burden of empire" (155)...the list may go long! While Zia Suleri wrote (and moaned about not writing enough) about the grand narratives of public history, the background stories of these younger women and men put forth another version, interpreted in terms of human emotions and behaviour. No doubt, this memoir gets richer due to the profoundly deep observations of Sara Suleri who connects a moral or political penumbra to most of the comic, childish, innocent and domestic moments in this book.

Ifat was murdered at the tender age of twenty-nine, (reminding of Ammu dying at the 'viable-die-able age' in *God of*

Small Things) leaving three cherub like children. Relatives blamed it on Pip's enemies- Ifat became the mythological Iphigenia- the daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnstra who had to be offered as "a sacrificial lamb" to please goddess Artemis during the Trojan war (Cotterell, 54). But a keen reader will also be wary of the annual ritual performed in the ancestral village of her in-laws where previously female infants were sacrificed to keep the male children secure. Now, some animal or even an 'Other' daughter is offered to tribal gods perhaps! The unnatural deaths of Mamma and Ifat, the aged end of Dadi – all take place in the context of grand historical events, erased from common memory but ooze pain and grief for the narrator and her siblings. These deaths appear as history collecting its dues from those who had no role in disturbing anything.

When president Bhutto was tried for Martial law in 1979, Ifat might have been a victim of marital law, Bhutto was kept in house-arrest, Ifat had just gone out of her house gate; mamma died a year ago, daadi just a week before the national hanging. Bhutto's end had unleashed the submerged 'brute force' (119), father Suleri had been a long-lost friend of Bhutto. The word *murder* mortified the entire family more than the real loss itself, Sara writes, "let us wash the word of murder from her limbs" but rumours rose up like a "pestilence" (141), "...we lost all privacy..., Ifat had become a public news" (120). Her children were lost to them forever. How does one deal with such a grave, heart wrenching tragedy? They tried to put Ifat's body in a new discourse, in a different discourse with words private, history looked like "a heavy bundle of grief", they just managed to live with themselves, by "making a habit of loss" (143). She was not allowed to keep the children as remnant of her sister. Patriarchy won once more. She calls it a kind of 'migration in itself'- which transformed her life forever.

All three women who depart from this world almost make the family feel 'lost', emptied of life- Mamma's death had made the narrator leave her homeland and sent her looking for space to breathe in America. This migration had deprived her of not only the family which had been like a shield of safety and a source of

emotional nourishment but also the much desired 'company of women' and the pleasure of all time conversations (1). The conversations which helped them open up to each other unlike the outside world which wanted them to be 'hidden', making a "wellspring of euphoria" (99). They had built up a subculture of women with alternative understanding of the world, undictated by the household and state power surrounding their lives. This company of women, brothers and friends had an untying effect, loosening their tongues and they relished the divine relief of communication. That's why she felt deserted by the 'audience' (1) for whom she was living her life in a narrative, after leaving her home state for a foreign country. If a performer has no cheering audience, how do you perform? - it is that kind of an emptiness, a loss, a nostalgia which never flows in a song of mourning.

So, if quitting Pakistan was synonymous with leaving the company of women- it was also related to the way the country looked at itself- like a woman, like a bride or a mother to be kept secure, untouched, pure and chaste, nourishing-giving-homing all-sheltering all. Although this home country was a citadel of her sufferings, this simultaneously provided her with a haven of all joys and pleasures too. It remains enshrined in her memories even when she mocks its monuments of patriarchy and political degradation.

An idea that the Postcolonial feminism is sceptical of-most of the times, the ideology of nationalism is often invested in an idealised patriarchal image of perfect womanhood. India and Pakistan both have made mothers of the country and have burnt their daughters in Sati, for dowry, for honour, for pleasure, for fear. Virginia Woolf's words in *Three Guineas* sound prophetic, when this happens, women effectively "have no country" (234). Sara witnessed how women were yearning for a breathing space in this newly instated male territory which restricted middle class women by all means. She along with friends and family tries to nurture a counter-space to the worlds of both fathers and mothers as a conscious feminist writer. One can find a spiritual protest in her self-righteous choice of getting away from the bourgeois reality and her preference to dwell in the diaspora of dreams. She

seems to believe in Marcel Proust's saying, "Remembrance is a triumph over time" (2015), and turns her memories to the muse. The objects, people of her past life and spaces remain luminous in her memory to help her move ahead towards a hard-won inner peace.

Ifat as a mature married woman had told her siblings- "a woman can't come home", "...they live in their bodies" (141). Mairi Jones/Surraiya Suleri also could never return, for she had become a mother and had been 'living in her body'. She was a colonised being through her body and name, never to be accepted as their own by the extended family. A sufficient contentment ascertained her living, the pride she felt for the fruit of her labour – the bright and beautiful children making her feel at home. She paid her undivided attention to her demanding husband. Though she did feel "exhausted" (33) by the incessant pregnancies but she took it as the sacrifice to be part of this new history. Sometimes, she looked like a martyr to the genteel and imposed femininity, locked in the tyranny of a womanly routine. Ifat complained about Mamma living like "a torn rag doll, a relic" (140) of what she was previously. Sara tries to reimagine the folktale of Hir-Ranjha, finds an aspect of Hir in Mamma, "moving in the decorum of a repudiated name" (155), like a guest in her own name. But gradually, passing time helped Mairi to understand that any number of sacrifices cannot make her life gratifyingly accomplished. Pip believed in his "version of the history" (121) only, he could not be "changed" (151). Zia's weakness for history and women remained strong.

But a portion of Mairi, Sarah's mother, remains out of the frame- the White woman in alien lands- she was perceived to be solitary and self-absorbed by her children, she put herself above the matter of familiar and unfamiliar, bloomed like a girl on the sight of a pansy (139)! She retained a respectable status as a college lecturer appointed to teach none other than the exceptional Jane Austen, a much admired one. She was Sarah's teacher too and gets to know the stronger side of Mamma in the classroom discussions- a person much different from her mother's role. She was showered by students' admiration and worshipped by her

children as a deity. She reminds one of Mrs. Ramsay from *To the Lighthouse* but with an additional personality trait of being satisfied with all her decisions. She remained an intriguing paradox to Sara- the narrator, for her sagacity like Cordelia and her courage mixed with docility like that of Desdemona, never tried to match the wiliness of her husband who was expeditious with his resolutions. Her demise was untimely too. It is then that she realises that her *Meatless Days* in the real sense have dawned, "woken to a world of meatless days" (42) standing for a world without Mamma, without Iffat and daadi, without their love to live on, without their sounds and speech to surround her life. The sunshine and the allure of the brief spring –all had lost their significance. That's why leaving Pakistan was 'tantamount to giving up the company of women' (01)!

Sara interrogates and reflects upon her mother's self-renunciation for fidelity, her assiduous efforts to fit in another culture and another history. She was never spoon-fed on feminism by her Western mother but she was made conscious of herself being significant, which helped her to reinvent her life in a desired way, leaving the place which tried to seal her into the crushing objecthood of a woman. She finally renounced the prison-house of a father who wanted "a veto power on her life" (115), an impending bad marriage, a mother land, to experience a life offering some liberty to be herself, at the cost of being a migrant. It saved her from the artificiality of womanhood, and recognised her human self. She thus, resolved "not to choose to dwell on such a night: I plan to save my day light" (168). This text is a wonderful testament of sisterhood sensibility in which these women find acceptance, affection and support for each other's dreams and endeavours.

Meatless Days is thus, an alternative narrative in a revisionary mode- assisting Sara Suleri to define and present woman as human, reclaiming her first-person status, and not just a relative being to man. She feels more orphaned when she finds that her mother never wrote a book though she was capable (175), it could have lent her some consolation and peace. She misses how so many books are left unwritten in this world, like books

about real motherhood, about breast feeding (01), about real womanhood, about all those big and small things surrounding women which need to be told about, discussed, rejoiced and revered.

That's her Postcolonial side – choosing to write a memoir from the margins, from the space not fitting into the norms. She takes up the life and history of Pakistan not from above, but from below using a language and a politics in which her being, her interests come first, not the last (Young 02). She takes out meaning from the trivial womanly gossips, writes about the kitchen issues and how a dining table is "a more loaded domestic space" than even the bedroom (35). Thus, she chooses to remain out of its subjectivity, living the way she wants to. She strives to be "a tale unto herself" (44), wants to live "within words, making them her home", write books to fill the void left by all those books unwritten by women, which makes the syllabus of a paper on the Third World Writing (19) prescribed in University sparse on women's representation. To a question on these missing books, she had to answer by saying the most astonishing, unexpected thing, "there are no women in the third world" (19). She doesn't want another generation of youngsters to repeat this unnerving question. The memoir thus celebrates the love, loss and longing for all those women who lived and who could write, but have gone unnoticed by history! This revisionary memoir succeeds in securing the position of a postcolonial feminist text- ready to guide generations who could be deluded by – mutton dressed up as lamb!

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BOOK REVIEW

N.S. GUNDUR

THE STORYTELLER WITH A DIFFERENCE *A LIFE IN THE WORLD:* U.R. ANANTHAMURTHY IN CONVERSATION WITH CHANDAN GOWDA

(Harper Collins, 2019, pp. 182)

"How are we really different from our European and Western counterparts? My answer is: Because we are predominantly storytellers".

– Chandrashekhar Kambar, Preface, *Karimayi* (2017)

U.R. Ananthamurty [1932-2014], a well-known Kannada writer, was a phenomenon. As a public voice, he had many 'stories' to tell about our contemporary life in India. Therefore, we may call U.R. Ananthamurthy (URA) a great story-teller of our times, not in the sense that he wrote fictional narratives like *Samskara* (1965) or *Suryana Kudure* (Stallion of the Sun,1995), but in Walter Benjamin's sense- as 'someone who has got an ability to exchange his experiences and worldviews with others' (83). URA restlessly reflected on the problems of this world, and always had the urge to share his anxieties and reflections on contemporary life with others. Perhaps because of this urge, he always liked to converse with friends and people who visited him. As K. V. Akshara rightly characterizes, URA was a "person with a culture of conversation" (2015). Accordingly, he immensely enjoyed talking to others as much as thinking and writing about issues in the world. The present book *A Life in the World: U. R. Ananthamurthy in Conversation with Chandan Gowda* (2019) is the result of one such conversation.

URA himself had suggested Chandan Gowda interview him. Chandan, who is with Azim Premji University, Bengaluru now, is a translator of URA's fiction, besides being one of URA's intimate conversational friends. Chandan, after some time, prepared himself for the exchange of ideas and shot the interview at URA's residence over ten long days. As a result, we have an important document that reveals not only the mind of one of modern India's great writers, his making but also his penetrating insights into varied issues that twentieth century India grappled with. The entire conversation is structured into ten chapters that narrate the story of the making of URA the writer and thinker, besides airing his intellectual concerns like the problem of local traditions and languages in India.

I would like to introduce this book with the analytical framework of, as mentioned above, URA as a storyteller par excellence. The stories URA tells are typological—they are self-reflective, narrating the formation of his self and thought-provoking ruminations on this world as well; URA tells stories at home and the experiences of the far places too. Sheldon Pollock aptly tries to capture the defining features of URA's life and work as "his relationship with India's language order and his relationship with the world order" (Pollock, 2015). They all come as interwoven narratives in these conversations.

The first three chapters 'Early Years', 'Mysore' and 'Birmingham and After' are self-reflective stories that narrate URA's intellectual formation. From Brahmin Agrahara through Maharaja's College in Mysore to Birmingham University in England, his experiences contributed to his 'world making'. He did not completely reject one space for another, but critically imbibed the virtues of all. Therefore, he became a critical insider, as the famous description of him goes. The gossip in the backyard of his village provides him with material for his novels. According to URA, our knowledge of the world comes through the front yard and the back yard; the front yard is a space for males and the back yard is a space where women come and chit chat. They talk of various issues right from their body pains and menstruation to the affairs of their husbands. As URA says, "as a

child, I would listen to such talk. So, I have a theory that gossip is the source of a novel. A novel itself is gossip "(10). It was his early childhood experience that forms the larger part of his novel writing material.

Further, the conversation narrates URA's Mysore days. During his college days in Mysore, URA became a voracious reader beyond the syllabus. He began to read Gorky, Romain Rolland, Shelley, Tolstoy, Kuvempu, Karanth and others there. Those were the times of great learning for him as he came across great teachers and scholars including Professor C. D. Narasimaiah, S. V. Ranganna, Ti. Nam. Srikantaiah, D. L. Narasimahachar, G. S. Shivarudrappa, Prabhu Shankar and other prominent men of letters. Although URA began writing as a school-boy, he discovered himself as a Navya writer in the company of a poet like Gopal Krishna Adiga in Mysore. This is a story of self-discovery.

Walter Benjamin classifies the tribe of storytellers into two types- somebody who has gone on a trip has something to tell about and a man who has stayed at home. Both have something to tell about this world. In the first two chapters, URA narrates the stories of home, and in the next chapter 'Birmingham and After' tells the story of his trip to the western world. A completely new world opens up to URA when he goes to Birmingham on a Commonwealth scholarship to pursue his PhD. What is interesting to note here is that the company of great cultural critics like Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, Sturt Hall, E. P. Thompson, David Lodge and the like does not influence him to become yet another Indian cultural critic in an academic sense, but his English days helped him discover Kannada deeply and imbibe the art of writing novels. Pollock also observes that the choice URA made then to reject English in favour of Kannada was a significant and single most consequential act in URA's writerly life (2015).

URA wrote a letter to *The Times Literary Supplement,* objecting to the Commonwealth conference being represented only by English writers. Referring to this, URA says, "I had just read a book called *The Triumph of the English Language* and

knew how long it took English to triumph, to become the official language of England. So, I thought that Kannada would also have to struggle (55). Further, he says, I had seen in England great teachers of German literature. Students would study German literature very deeply and write dissertations in English … I thought of writing a PhD thesis on Shakespeare in Kannada…*"* (57).

Further, the remaining seven chapters are conversations that cover the cultural and political problems of India. Particularly the chapters 'Tradition', 'Language', 'A Few Friends' and 'Karnataka' reveal his deep insights into literature, language, Kannada writers, the Veerashaiva Movement, pen portraits of Kannada writers, intellectuals and politicians among others.

For URA, tradition is a very important concept, without which writing is not possible. Because, according to him, without belonging to a tradition we cannot be writers. It is very important to notice his perceptive observation about what it means to be a writer in *bhasha* when says, "I knew that D. R. Bendre was a world writer by belonging to Dharwad. Kuvempu was a world writer by belonging to *Malnad*. Karanth was a world writer by belonging to South Canara. So, being a world writer, in my view, is not what the present-day commercial world thinks "(60).

It is in one such conversation that URA makes a distinction between traditionalism and tradition. Both, according to him, are concerned with the past. But the way they deal with the past is different. He says, "I want the past to be useful in the present. How to make the past useful is not the concern of traditionalists. How to preserve the past is the concern of traditionalists. My concern is not how to preserve the past, but how to make the past useful for the present world. That's all. And once you understand this, the Jains, the Buddhists, our variegated tradition— because our tradition is not one, but several—would become useful" (67). URA, therefore, looks at the Kannada literary tradition as continuity from Pampa to Adiga and Kuvempu. He wanted to belong to the tradition of Kannada, and it was not a blind patriotic choice, but he had something to tell in his language to his people.

In the Chapter 'Being in the Public', URA narrates stories about important socio-political issues, and among them, the most important is the story of the common school that can bring about social changes in India. The chapter 'Language' continues URA's public concern, particularly his views on translation, language in general, and the interface between Kannada and English. He makes a distinction between language as communication and language as communion. The former is used when we go about in this world, to recognize the world, but the latter is more than communication; he characterizes it thus: "As a matter of fact, if I begin to abuse you with terrible words, you cease to understand the meaning of those words, but realize that I am angry. That is communion rather than for communication" (100-101).

For URA translation means an everyday practice in multilingual counties like India. According to him we often switch over from one set of codes and registers to another set in India. Therefore, we live in the midst of translation. Further, translation is a cultural need for URA. He thinks that it helps us open up to other worlds by going beyond our provincial world. A good translation, in his opinion, is one that does not seem like a translation; he says, "When I translate one text, say, a Kannada text into German, and a German says it reads almost like a German text, we tend to think it's a good translation." Also one of the aims of translation in his opinion is that the target language should acquire the character of a source language. For example, after B. M. Srikantaiah, Kuvempu and writers like URA himself, Kannada has acquired many qualities of English prose. As he beautifully puts it, "change the language itself and create generosity within it"(106).

'A Few Friends', the next chapter, gives pen-portraits of individuals who mattered in URA's life from K. Kailasapathy, a Marxist, to J H Patel, former Chief Minister of Karnataka; Shantaveri Gopal Gowda, a Lohiaite who fought for land reforms in Karnataka; Ram Manohar Lohia; K V Subbanna, founding member of Ninasam; B V Karanth, theatre and film director; D. R. Nagaraj, a great Kannada cultural critic and others. Among them, Gopal Gowda was intellectually important for URA. What

he admired in Gopal Gowda was not just that he worked among people but his subtle mind that used to grasp the nuances of the world through concrete images and analogies. URA cites a couple of examples to illustrate this point.

In yet another chapter 'Karnataka', URA tells the story of the making of modern Karnataka and the Kannada tradition. Delving into the Lingayats and their Mathas, besides Dalit life, he offers an illuminating understanding of it. In the chapter 'India's Political Life', URA narrates the story of modern India's political history by reflecting on Gandhi, Ambedkar, Nehru and Lohia. In his view, Gandhi, who played with ideas, was suspicious of the modern world system because we can hurt any part of the world by doing something wrong in any other part of the world. However, URA considers his generation a product of the Nehruvian age rather than the Gandhian. According to him, Nehruvian legacy was very good and we got something very wholesome from the Nehruvian tradition. URA looks at Gandhi and Ambedkar as complementary minds. He says, "Both Gandhi and he (Ambedkar), URA says, take different spiritual journeys. One takes a spiritual journey and says, 'Hey Ram' and dies, and Ambedkar takes to Buddhism and dies. Gandhi uses Ram for politics and Ambedkar uses Buddha for politics… (155-156). Ambedkar becoming a Buddhist is very important for me. It's not merely a political act. It's a deep act of self-purification. So, Gandhi and he begin from two different directions, but they meet at one point of wanting spiritual emancipation" (156). In URA's estimation, Lohia was a very great critical insider, and he was able to produce more political leaders than Nehru.

In the final chapter 'In Conclusion', we get to hear the story of URA's tastes including his favorite cuisine and writers, his attachments and his dislike for middle-class backbiting among others. As a finale, he states that he wishes to be remembered as a teacher and a writer— a Kannada writer. Benjamin also says, "the storyteller joins the ranks of the teachers" (107). There is a close connection between the act of conversation and being a teacher; teacher not in the official sense of somebody appointed as a teaching faculty, but in the sense of giving a pedagogical counsel.

Ananthamurthy conceived himself as a teacher in this sense. The title of the book *A Life in the World* provokes us to ask, what does it mean to lead a life in the world? For URA, to live in the world is to constantly be engaged with this world, and teaching and writing are the modes of that engagement for him it seems; both modes for him are important ways of conversing with this world and about this world.

The chief value of storytelling, according to Benjamin, lies in its ability to counsel and impart wisdom. URA's stories about this world are rich reservoirs of counsel and wisdom as they are the products of URA's care for this world, *lokachintane*, and these stories are constantly in search of what is good for us, as Kannadigas and as Indians. Therefore, he is a public intellect not just because, as in Edward Said's idea of public intellect, he spoke truth to power (Said, 1994), but he primarily cared to bother about this world. His concern for the common school, local languages, multiculturalism, critique of development and humanistic practices are evidence of his care for the world.

The present book gives concisely an idea of the making of URA as an intellectual and writer, besides his views on the contemporary world. His autobiography, *Suragi* (2012) reveals his making, and his other writings give us an idea of his worldview. The present book tries to give that entire package, what we know about URA in different texts, in 182 pages.

Chandan Gowda's 'Introduction' to the book gives an overview of URA's works and thoughts. A few lines about the process of conversation as a genre would have made it a useful exercise. The chief instrument of a storyteller is the tool of conversation. It is well-known that URA took delight in conversation as it gave him an opportunity to test his ideas by sharing them with others. Therefore, conversation for URA was a means for further developing his ideas, but it never used to be just a one-way talk, leaving the listener in isolation. Again, to invoke Benjamin, who makes a distinction between the listener in the company of a storyteller and the reader of a novel, who is isolated (99), URA would offer companionship to the listener, undermining the power relationship between the teller and the

listener. Therefore, he was as much fond of listening to stories as much as he telling stories (Ganesh, 2015).

As URA's conversations in the volume can be read as a kind of self-narrative, it would be interesting to reflect upon how this kind of conversation extends the boundaries of autobiography. A little thought about conversation as self-narrative, in the Introduction to the book, would highly be illuminating as self-narratives in the age of new media take different forms including documentaries, YouTube, and blogs among others. Autobiography as a dialogue itself is an interesting genre. Different genres and forms generate different meanings, and therefore, they give different experiences and insights. In this respect, the conversation in the volume, by virtue of its form, gives a different slice of life compared to the meaning of life we come across in an autobiography like *Suragi*. Therefore, after reading URA's autobiography, it is altogether a different experience to listen to this 'speaking autobiography'.

Chandan's questions in this book are straightforward, and they do not interfere much, thereby letting URA carry on with his flow. However, several questions in the book do not probe further taking clues from previous responses. In this respect, Rahamat Tarikere's *Lokavirodigala Jote* [Among Dissidents] (2011) is a fine example of a probing conversation with modern Kannada intellectuals. Questions that would have generated hitherto unknown matters about URA would have been helpful here. For a writer like URA, deeply probing questions like—how he used to construct the plots for his fiction; how he fashioned his Kannada for fictional narratives; who used to read his first draft and how he used to correct them; how he got his much-acclaimed novel *Samskara* published; and how he wrestled with the creation and development of characters in fiction—and other questions of 'techne' would have made this volume richer. It is important because, like his contemporaries including P. Lankesh, Yashwant Chittal, Girish Karnad and others, URA has hardly narrated the story of his craft elsewhere.

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BOOK REVIEW

SAMI RAFIQ

A CELEBRATION OF IMAGINATION LEONARD COHEN AND I: SHORT STORIES BY SOMUDRANIL SARKAR (HAWAKAL PUBLISHERS, 2023, PP. 139)

Leonard Cohen (1934-2016) was a Canadian singer, song writer, musician, poet, novelist and painter. He was the recipient of numerous Canadian and international awards during his lifetime and won the Grammy Awards several times.

As the title of the book "Leonard Cohen and I" implies, there is a bond between Cohen and the writer that spans time and genre.

The short story collection is a dedication to the genius of Leonard Cohen and is an adaptation of some of his lyrics into stories.

Adaptation between different genres can be a challenging task and puts demands on the writer's creativity and storytelling skills. Though music has been used to tell stories since ancient times, conversely enough, the stories in this book very subtly and skillfully celebrate the embedded ideas in the songs from Cohen's most popular albums.

The stories elaborate the ideas in such a creative manner, that every reading is a journey of imagination beginning and ending with the title of the lyric which inspired the story.

They celebrate the complexities of life and jolt the reader with intense emotions.

But more than just developing the characters from the songs into real life humans, there is an artistic exploration of emotions and an experimentation with style.

The characters in the stories are common people from the street but the trajectory of their lives is undefined and often takes the readers on a journey into the absurd.

Almost always music and sound seem to be a significant backdrop or milestone into an unknown, often an abstract journey.

So as Sarkar says, inspired by Cohen's quote in 'Cohen and the Refugee Heart,' the characters may be hookers, loners, lovers or writers— *There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in.*

In the story "Everybody Knows", the main character is Vincent, a kind of underdog, working for Rita, a rich lady. Vincent's unrequited and unfruitful love for Utsaleena and the vacuum created by his surreptitiously enjoying his boss Rita's luxuries all culminate into a murder. The last line of the story is:' Everybody knows', in accordance with the song which inspired it.

There is a certain static quality to the situation when the story ends, bringing out the intention of the song, an expression of the blind racial inequalities and injustices in the world:

Everything around him started passing like a time lapse. He knew that everybody would look at him with suspicion. But nobody did. Probably, no one would ever look at him because the deed is done. Or perhaps everybody knows that he has been in trouble and what he's been through. Vincent thought that it might as well be a possibility enough that no one had taken notice of him. Because he has felt in his heart that one is bound to stumble upon faces. Mysteriously, he covered miles when he realized that he had been walking for hours.

The story based on the song with the same title, "Seems so long-ago Nancy" is an artistic portrayal of the life and mind of a girl called Nancy. The song itself was very popular and Cohen fans wanted to know more about the story behind the song.

It is based on the true story of a girl called Nancy who was confined to the psychiatric ward. When she goes against the conventions of her respectable family and gets pregnant, the baby is taken away from her. Eventually she shoots herself with her brother's shotgun.

But the story has an abstract painting-like quality as the events of Nancy's troubled life slide in the reader's mind more like pictures than events.

It uses the image of the House of Mystery mentioned in the song, as a kind of psychic delusion or inner mental refuge.

Literature is replete with delusional characters, be it Blanche in "A Streetcar Named Desire", or the Doppelganger in Dostoevsky's novel *The Double*. Nancy like all these characters is shown as a misfit in society and therefore shoots herself in the House of Mystery which didn't even exist for ordinary people.

The story "Listen to the Hummingbird" is an adaptation of one of the last songs by Cohen bearing the same title. While the song implies developing insight and hearing for Nature in the form of the hummingbird, the story inspired by it is an exploration of the irrational and the uncanny. The main character of the story Srinjoy happens to find a case with bluetooth earpods while strolling across the street.

The earpods which switch on without human intervention, bestow on Srinjoy the uncanny power of listening to conversations in anyone's head and also delivering his voice in anyone's head.

Srijoy uses this new found power to entertain but also manages to create traumatic situations.

He manages to dissociate himself from the world of reality as he gets obsessed with the voices in his head. Eventually when the story concludes it could be summed up as a journey beyond human hearing and technology to the world of nature as Srinjoy sums up:

In random directions, a spate of patterned voices started rummaging, unable to bear that, Srinjoy's hands reached for his

ears. To his surprise, there weren't any earpods. Unable to register the fact, he sat down. He felt as if his brain was about to explode. Little by little, the squeaks and twitters unwinded, making him realize that those are not random sounds. Neither patterned voices. But voices. Voices of hummingbirds.

The story titled "Field Commander Cohen" is inspired by a song with the same title. While in the lyric, Cohen imagines himself a field commander who experiences the trauma and agony of war, the story develops this idea on a deeper level in which a pair of lovers are on the point of separation because they are on opposite sides in the war.

The story focuses on the desperation and sorrow of the two as they try to erase their familiarity and connection piece by piece.

It stands apart from the song which inspired it, because it is a recounting of just a few emotional moments.

Through the stories in this collection, Sarkar has added a new dimension to Cohen's popular lyrics by deepening their emotional concerns and by extending their canvas to include compassion for all human beings. The stories are a fascinating and scintillating artistic sojourn.

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BOOK REVIEW

ADIBA FAYAZ

RUTH VANITA'S *THE BROKEN RAINBOW:* A POETICS OF LIFE

Matthew Arnold in his seminal essay "The Study of Poetry" (1888) describes poetry as a criticism of life. Ruth Vanita's anthology *the broken rainbow*, poems and translations, offers a close assessment of life reflecting upon identity and relationships. Published by Copper Coin, Delhi, the book is written over a period of four-and -a half- decades and is divided into four segments.

Any anthology like this is a book of select poems. The selection comes into consideration through a personal choice. Right from its title this book is strikingly evocative in nature. The first segment of the book titled "A Little More Than Kin" is devoted to the kinship that women share with women. This part alone has 10 short poems celebrating different aspects of womanhood. Ruth Vanita begins her collection by talking about the "many versions" "of conversion" that "Ancestry" carries and focuses on establishing ancestral connections and lineage through language and culture by building a successful impression of multifaceted India. Her next poem from the collection - "Becoming a Lady"- is a commentary on the role of wife as a universal support system to run errands and make life functional: "My uncle told me, an untidy girl, /to look in the mirror every morning. /They who chase chimeras- love and work, / have no time to be or look like ladies." (9) Vanita finally concludes the poem as "Now I pause, reflect and take my time. /To be a lady, one must have a wife." (9) The idea of wife – an asexual entity here- can be interpreted in two ways. One, the poem acknowledges the role of wife in transforming an 'untidy girl 'into

a 'lady' and reflects on the modern-day tussle of a working women and her need to have a helping hand as effective as a wife. Household chores have always been considered secondary to other forms of salaried jobs and therefore, having a wife- a symbol of absolute service provider– to carry out life is a necessity. Second, it reduces the role of wife as a mere caretaker of the house and people in it.

"My Wife's Shoes" and "Ghazal for My Son, Four Years Old" are both ghazals in *rekhti* style with a rhyme scheme of AA, BA, CA, DA, EA, FA. The poems are shorter in length with six couplets only. In the former, Vanita talks about how the husband does not want to be identified as "a goody two-shoes" like his wife and keeps wondering as to how can she "always cure the blues with new shoes?"(10). In the latter she describes the issues related to displacement. Vanita herself divides her time between Missoula and Gurgaon and probably the pain of displacement for people like her comes out as "Visas, tickets haunt, time zones exhaust, / Customs confound, consolidators rout me." (11) She ends her first segment of her anthology with a sestina. A sestina is a poem of six stanzas of six lines each and a final triplet. All six stanzas have the same six words at the end of them all in different sequence. The poem begins on a note of complain, "I tried calling you but you didn't pick up." (11) An early version of English sestina is Elizabeth Woodville's (1437-1492) "Hymn to Venus" and Edmund Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* (1579). The reason as to why Vanita chose to write a sestina could be to enhance the subject matter of her poem as it demands to adhere to a strict order of poetic style.

The second segment of her anthology, "But that was in Another Country…" reminds one of Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1589-1590) and T S Eliots epigraph in, "The Portrait of a Lady" (1915). This segment has 18 short poems. Her "Ekphrasis in Reverse" subverts the conventional idea of ekphrasis. Ekphrasis is a poetic device that comes from the Greek where the verbal description of visual work of art takes place. In Vanitas's poem, the visual work of art is yet to happen, "I would like to paint you coming up the stairs" (18), and therefore,

ekphrasis happens in reverse order here. Vanita' selection of poems has been intertextual in nature- the reference to Scheherazade from *Arabian Nights* in "Stories" (19) or the mythological reference to "Lakshman- Rekha" from *Ramayana* adds layers to her verses. The former refers to the healing power of stories and latter urges to set a limit or draw a *Lakshman Rekha* to human capacity for enduring pain. She writes, "All roads are right and none leads/ anywhere. / All space is yours/to take in, to/ breathe out, to bear." (24) The poem ends on a note of hopefulness towards life and situations.

Her third segment "LGBTQIA or Perhaps A to Z" with 16 poems begins with a "Sonnet for a Stranger, Delhi, 1989". The second part of the title "Perhaps A to Z" points towards the all-inclusive nature of the person and poet Vanita happens to be. The first sonnet of the segment has a particular reference to a historical episode of 1989 Delhi when lesbians from Delhi met for Woman's rights to discuss matters related to compulsive heterosexuality. She dedicates her next "Delhi Elegy" to noted medieval historian, translator and gay rights activist Saleem Kidwai and Indian American gay poet Agha Shahid Ali. Her poem "Incubus" has another folkloric reference to William Blake. Henry Fuseli (1741-1825) a Swiss painter, represented supernatural experience through male demons or incubus in his art work *The Nightmare* (1781). Fuseli's encounter with Blake in 1765 profoundly influenced him and his works and now through this poem Vanita follows the footsteps of Blake to acknowledge Fuseli's artistic vision.

The book takes a sudden turn when she pays tribute to Prof. Srinivas Ramachandra Siras by writing a memorial in his honor. Prof. Srinivasa R. Siras was a Professor of Marathi at the Aligarh Muslim University. The story of his gay relationship was notoriously captured by a journalist in 2010. Professor gained wider recognition after a biographical movie named *Aligarh* was made in the year 2015. In the poem, Vanita raises questions on 'love', 'death' and the 'grief' that follows the dead. She further writes, "The walls were witnesses to love and death/ The executioners were blind and deaf… (49) She clearly expresses her

discontent over the social exclusion and humiliation that Prof Siras had to face after his gay identity and gay relationship were discovered. Her next poem "Gay Indian Poets" brings to light the issue of belongingness for gay poets in the academic arena. She is very candid in revealing that there is no world for 'we'- the gay Indian poets. Vanita asserts, "To what school of poets did you belong? / she asked. Belong? Where? In what world? /There was a you, an I, but no- no 'we'" (50) Her "Dawn at the Rampur Library" has reference to three 18th century Urdu poets, Rangin, Insha and Jur'at , manuscripts of whose poetry are in the Rampur Raza Library. The poems centers around the core issue of human desire and its perception in society. She ends her anthology with her last segment named "Last Things". A translation of the devotional song, *Ab kaise chhute…* by Sant Raidas from circa 1450-1520, dedicated to Lord Rama, forms the last of all poems in this anthology.

The very title of the anthology *the broken rainbow* is equally significant. Like a rainbow, Vanita successfully pulls various hues and colors of life but Vanita's rainbow is not symmetrically arranged. It is 'broken', distorted but present- just as life is- unregulated and unprecedented. This is where her contribution as a contemporary Indian English poet stands apart. Also, it must be noted that the title in lower case reminds one of American writer, theorist and social critic, bell hooks, who like Vanita, wanted to draw the attention of her readers towards her writings and not herself.

As a translator, Vanita is uniquely abled to bring before us these verses, some of which are reprints, some supplied with footnotes but all of them cover a vast territory -from history to sexuality to modernity- thereby faithfully blending different worlds together. By making use of words such as *azaan or koyal* in "Dawn at the Rampur Library" *or shloka* in "In Memoriam", Vanita tries her hand at linguistic intermixing. She presents a garden of different kinds of poetry- translations, ghazals, rekhti, sonnets, dramatic monologue, elegy, villanelle, sestina- carrying typical Indian English flavor. The poems are mostly short but full of stories creating a dramatic effect all through. Vanita distinctly

refers to her inspirations in her journey of conceiving these poems to her associates such as Agha Shahid Ali, Hindi poet Archana Verma, Saleem Kidwai and one to her uncle. Ruth Vanita, through her poems questions the obvious and critically comments on the social understanding of people. Even with these short poems, her magic and charm continue to exist from first to the last segment.

It must be noted that Vanita as the co-founder of *Manushi*, India's first feminist magazine that was very well received by academicians and the popular readers of the 80's, has been working extensively for Women's movement since then and later became a social reformer through her thoughts and actions. Keeping up with the spirit of the progressive poetry, Ruth Vanita, with the texts and contexts that she writes in, has once again addressed pertinent topics. With this collection, Vanita certainly aims to change the landscape of contemporary Indian English poetry. This book is her poetic perspective and as a reviewer I appreciate the poet's art and her poetic imagination. One must buy and read the book as it touches upon myriad issues. The way in which she brings the personal and public concerns together is remarkable.

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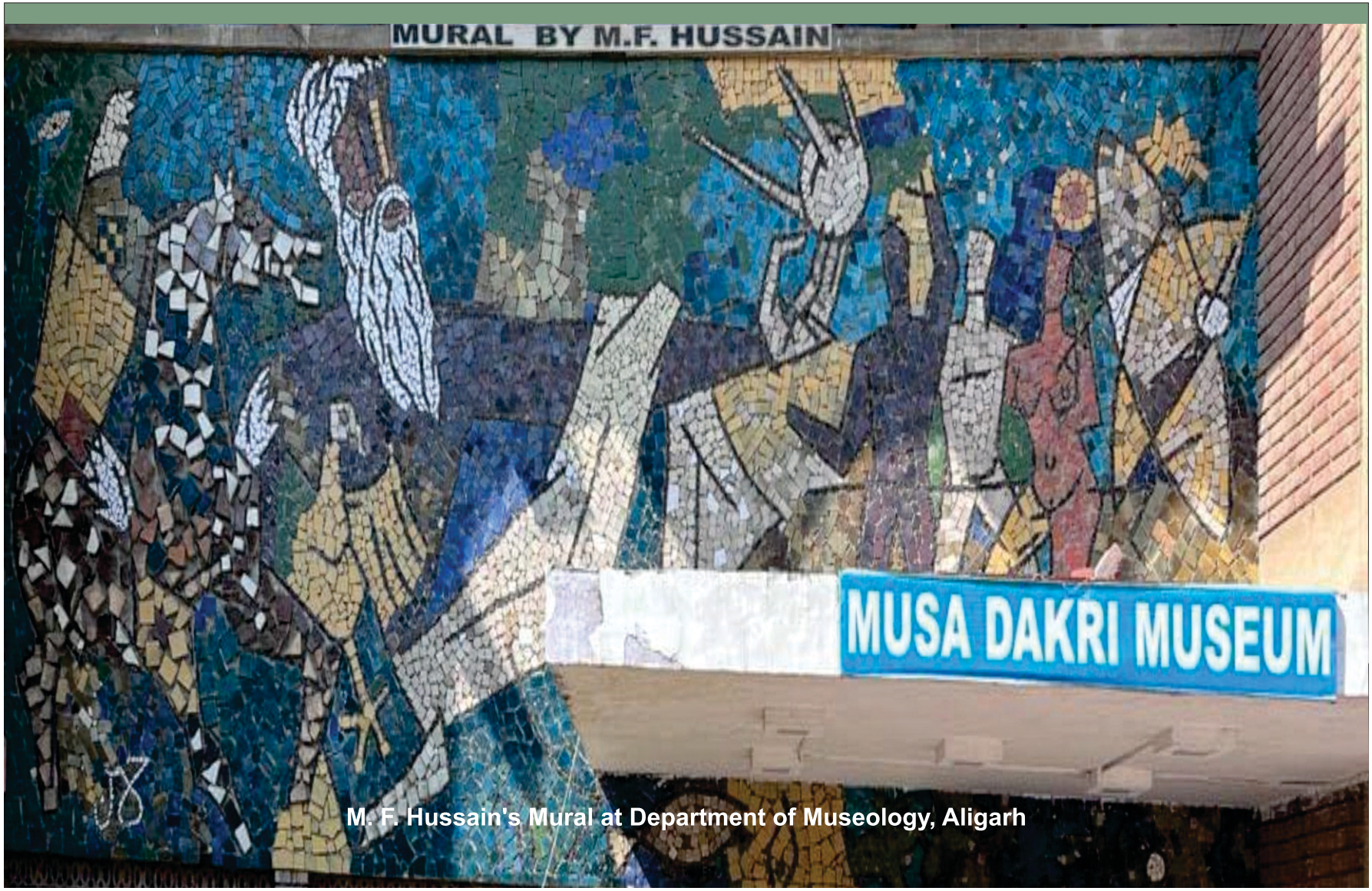

M. F. Hussain's Mural at Department of Museology, Aligarh