

The *Unhappy Consciousness* is the somewhat misleadingly bland title of the much-awaited book on Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay by Sudipta Kaviraj. Admitting the unenviability of the task of finding an appropriate title for such a challenging book, it is nonetheless necessary to point this out. Kaviraj has brought under one rubric what began as a series of essays on different aspects of Bankimchandra's writings. The result is a scintillating book, critical but attentive, capturing torments of this archetypal intellectual acutely conscious of the cunning maze of history, the need to tame it and at the same time be authenticated by it. The liminality this imposes is forever transgressive. An overarching pattern of moral regulation frames this transgressive genius.

It is this subtle play between centre and periphery that makes Kaviraj's book such an exciting one. According to the received orthodoxy, Bankimchandra is given the honorific 'Rishi' without problematizing the epithet in any way. Though there is a clearly indigenist sanction behind the title, the notion of the 'sage', as John Holloway's brilliant formulation brought out in 1953 (*The Victorian Sage*), relates more problematically to the post-Romantic era of the Victorians. Drawing upon the entire post-Enlightenment baggage of rationalist authentication, Holloway points to the peculiar short-circuiting of the entire process that the 'sagedom' confers, so that knowledge becomes a matter of unassailable insight direct and unmediated by ratiocinative discursiveness. In a strict sense of the term, Bankim is a Victorian sage, his life-span coinciding with the heyday of the Victorian Empire-building (1838-94). Coming from the 'periphery', however, the metropolis was deaf to this voice. One wonders if Bankim was sensitive to this marginalization, for having begun writing in English (*Rajmohan's Wife*), Bankim lost no time to shift to his own language. The result is a many-splendoured corpus opened for us by Sudipta Kaviraj in this modest-sounding book. Those of us who have full access to the writings of the metropolitan Victorians, are delighted to point out that 'Rshi' Bankim far outstrips the Victorian 'sages' who wrote in their colonizing tongue. Relating universalistically to Western love and particularistically with the knowledge-systems and the expressive modules

The Cunning Maze of History

Jasodhara Bagchi

THE UNHAPPY CONSCIOUSNESS: BANKIMCHANDRA AND THE FORMATION OF NATIONALIST DISCOURSE IN INDIA

by Sudipta Kaviraj

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offered by the elite culture of Bengal of his own time, Bankim's many-sided interrogation of colonial knowledge resulted - as Kaviraj has ably demonstrated - in an *oeuvre* that remains unmatched, as far as the reviewer's knowledge extends, by anything produced in England in his time.

One of the first batch of graduates of the colonial University of Calcutta, Bankimchandra belonged to a community of Brahmans from Bhatpara known for their expertise in traditional Sanskrit learning. As an intellectual, Bankim's credentials

mutual interrogation of 'order and progress', complex enough for the hegemonizing bourgeoisie of the West, posed endless negotiations for an intellectual like Bankim, simultaneously hegemonizing and hegemonized.

Even the opposition that Kaviraj observes in Bankim's writings is not complex enough: 'as a conservative he finds the formal necessity of social order immutable and inviolable; as an artist he finds the surges of desire equally immutable and ungovernable by human conventions.' As Kaviraj himself brings out, the social

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were formidable. Fully exposed to the latest doctrines of 'progress' emanating from the post-Enlightenment Europe, he specially got himself trained in Sanskrit scriptures, poetry and poetics. This equipped Bankim for the self-appointed task, as Rabindranath suggested later, of being simultaneously the cleansing 'reformer' as well as an innovative creative artist. To his British superiors he was an able administrator and an able *romancier*. By opening out the corpus of Bankim's writings for close scrutiny, Sudipta Kaviraj has led us into the complex negotiations that the multiple identities of Bankim involve. The play of 'order and progress' was a particularly complex one for Bankim. His writings, as Kaviraj unfurls, belie the single storyline of the oriental 'order' being disrupted by occidental 'progress'. The interlocking process of the

order itself was fractured, gangrenous and had to be cauterized with the help of the same 'surges of desire' with which it was in such obvious conflict.

The story of Bankim's writings that Kaviraj presents roughly covers the following trajectory: the fictional world of Bankim is a liminal one - transgressiveness is built into its moral quest. The escape route from this 'prison house of reality' is not easy. Kaviraj charts this in three different structures, the first one is that of banter, humour and satire; the second is the construction of a hero, or a 'representative man' out of a myth of praxis; the third is the construction of history - the habitual absence of factual history being adequately compensated by the elaborate construction of 'imaginary history'.

Sudipta Kaviraj's book rides the crest of a whole 'new wave' of reading Bankim's writings by

scholars coming from disciplines as varied as Political Science, Philosophy, Literature and History that came out right through the eighties and early years of the nineties, starting with Partha Chatterjee's influential analysis of Bankim's writings as the 'moment of departure' in the production of nationalist discourse. Kaviraj had himself enlisted a band of devoted readers, since his chapters were circulated individually as Occasional Papers of the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta and Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. While these were being circulated, Tapan Roy Choudhury, Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, France Bhattacharya, the late Bimal Krishna Matilal, Tanika Sarkar and myself published our respective studies. With hardly anything in common, each of these studies succeeded in unsettling the comfortable, unthinking niche of received reputation to which Bankim had receded. Sisir Kumar Das had warned us that all was not well in the state of Denmark. His much rewarded literary biography of Bankim was called *The Artist in Chains*, pointing to the dilemma of a fiercely independent creative artist like Bankim operating within the constraints of a colonial state.

The newer crop of writing on Bankim, mentioned above, gave a more 'readerly' rendering of Bankim's dilemma. These were more sensitive to the fissures and ruptures in Bankimchandra's style and content alike. Kaviraj's subtlety in locating these slippages in which we find the real artistic and intellectual signature of Bankim gives him a place of pride in this 'new wave' of scholarship on this great nineteenth-century artist-thinker.

The principle on which Kaviraj has organized his book has withstood the tendency to separate the artist from the social analyst. The result is a book that has successfully avoided the positivistic *l'homme et l'oeuvre* approach to Bankim. He is presented as an author whose 'authority' often gives way to a ludic space where the reader is a lot freer to discover the 'pleasures' of the text. His doctrine of culture (Kaviraj calls it by its German name '*Bildung*') thus has to be more gritty than Matthew Arnold's. His consciousness of the disenfranchised anarchy that occupied the 'centre', where social order should have rightfully reigned, makes him formulate a much more

strenuous version of it which he calls 'anusilan.' For the colonial male, this had to be more anxiously construed than Arnold's gentlemanly ideal of 'sweetness and light'. For Bankim's agenda was nothing short of a regenerated community of nationhood held together both by the travesty (Kamalakanta) and the cleansed myth (Krsna).

The first chapter on liminality and the taste for transgression in Bankim's writings is the only one that deals exclusively with his fictional writings that defy 'the mapping of social and familial space'. Kaviraj has very perceptively identified the conflict between the stability of the socially normative on the one hand, and the transgressiveness of individual passion on the other. One may well ask, is this yet another replay of 'European realism' in which the high bourgeois social order forever discovers itself? The answer, only in so far as it is a negative one, is to be found in the discussion of the last novels that are carried over in the renewed context of 'imaginary history' that forms the penultimate chapter of *Unhappy Consciousness*. The 'moral regulation' that Corrigan and Sayers identified as the founding principle of English State formation, does not suffice for the structure of Bankim's last novels which I had once characterized as 'gothic'.

Closer to Hegel's definition of tragedy, the moral conflict in Bankim's later writings is not so much between a stable centre and a centrifugal individual; it is rather one between collectivities, both fairly inviolable. This means that, for Bankim, history is fraught with tragic irony and that it is not the harbinger of the *telos* of redemption. In the middle of this fascinating study, stand two male figures - Kamalakanta and Krsna - one a reincarnation of the other in Hindu mythology. Kamalakanta is a drug addict (opium, the great colonial palliative) who is a self-professed pariah and a parasite. Could anyone have thought of a more effective antithesis to the cult of self-help propagated by Samuel Smiles and picked up by our Brahmo reformers? Himself a member of the lower rungs of the British judiciary, Bankim makes fun of the highly codified British legal system in Kamalakanta's deposition. However, this highly sensitive pariah can single-handedly take on the absurdity of colonial social order. His psychedelic visions, as some of us have also

shown, are capable of generating impassioned patriotic pleas that later get taken up in Bankim's most celebrated novel *Anandamath*. Within about twenty years of the publication of the novel, life imitated art. The militant nationalists turned revivalists and, as Rabindranath demonstrated in *Ghare Baire*, swadeshi nationalists turned themselves into 'santans' chanting 'Bande Mataram'.

So far so good; where Kaviraj triumphs is in answering the anti-hero with a hero. His assiduous cleansing (bowdlerizing?) of the image of Krsna from its Puranic and folk accretions was aimed at producing a hero, with far greater possibility of generating social consensus than Fichte's or Carlyle's heroes.

It is in the gerrymandering (!) tendency of 'imaginary history' that Kaviraj locates the final convergence of the 'conservatism' of Bankim, traditional thinker and the 'turbulent desire' of Bankim the romantic artist. There is an anxious acknowledgement of a historical consciousness as the only legitimate entry ticket to authentic 'modernity'. Bankim's attempts at constructing a national community through factual historical writings remain sadly fragmented. It is in the fictionalized history of his final period that he succeeds in articulating the social crisis - a deep crisis of leadership. The ideal of *Bildung* was not, as I mentioned earlier, simply a matter of 'sweetness and light' as in the Arnoldian ideal of culture. Born and bred in the interstices of alien domination, the ideal is fraught with a vengeful resistance embodied in what Kaviraj calls the 'undetermined' heroes, who could even be women like Devi Choudhurani. Kaviraj works out an interesting continuity between Kamalakanta, the grand jester of colonialism through the 'anusilan' of the cleansed community-leader Krsna to the heroes of the imaginary history in the last novels. The gap between fact and truth to which Kamalakanta first drew our attention, widens into the space of imaginary history that accommodates a grand pan-Indian myth of resistance.

Yet, Bankim was no nationalist. He had spurned the 'mendicancy' of the early nationalist stirrings. He does not appear to have taken any interest in the Indian National Congress that was founded in 1885. Nor did he enter the potent debate like the one that raged around the

Jaina Logic and Epistemology

V. K. Bharadwaja

JAINA LOGIC AND EPISTEMOLOGY

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This book contains seventeen papers, eleven in English, two in Hindi and four in Sanskrit, presented at a seminar held at Pune in 1995. Most topics belong to Jaina logic and epistemology; two of them are on God and women.

Nirmala Kulkarni discusses the interesting question of salvation (*moksa*) for women, the Svetambara Jaina philosophers arguing for its possibility while the Digambara Jaina thinkers denying it. In her observations she points out that even for the Svetambara thinkers 'a woman gets salvation by changing herself mentally to man. Therefore, they call the *Tirthankara* Malli (a woman) as Mallinatha (a man)' (p. 154).

Vijay Pandya focuses on Sankaracarya's critique of the Jaina *syadvada*, and his presentation is quite lucid. Vanayaka Bhatta distinguishes (a) the word (*pada*) from its object/use (*artha*), and (b) the linguistic meaning (*padartha*) from the understanding of linguistic meaning (*padarthadhi*), and unwittingly assimilates (b) to (c) the Fregean type of distinction between sense and reference. I wonder why.

On Frege's view, 'the Morning Star' and 'the Evening Star' have different linguistic meanings, but they are used to refer to one and the same object, Venus. Clearly, this distinction is quite different from the distinction (b) between linguistic meaning and the understanding of linguistic meaning, and therefore it would be a mistake to conflate one with the other.

Other topics discussed in the book include the concept of *pramana*, perception, analogy, verbal testimony, the notion of authorlessness of the scriptures, the self, cognizability of objects, extraordinary perceptual knowledge of material objects (*avadhijnana*), memory and recognition (*pratyabhijnana*). Most of these discussions are grey and they fail to rise above the run-of-the-mill level.

The book has no index or bibliography. Its get-up is good, but then there are several misprints noticeable on every page to mar the readability of the book.

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age of consent in 1891. Nonetheless, Bankim remains the founding figure of the nation-building process in India. The song *Bande Mataram* for which he is known to the rest of India perpetuates the icon of a great mythical mother whose children are in chains. She is also the ascetic mother paradoxically empowered by her powerlessness.

What the book skirts round is the question of Hindutva that raises its menacing head in this trajectory. Kaviraj is impatient with reductionist critiques of Bankim. Fair enough, but we still have to ask, how does this exclusionary history that blocked out at least two-thirds of the population get legitimized? It is not only the disciplined, centripetal reason that is exclusionary as Foucault would have us believe. The turbulent desire of romanticism is equally guilty. It wills the birth of a history that

unduly favours one group and produces a consensus that is flawed at the core. No wonder, the word 'gerrymandering' recurs almost like a nervous lick in the discussion on history. With all his brilliant constructions, satirical and idealized, Bankim will remain answerable to posterity. After all, it was in his journal *Prachar* that he clashed with young Rabindranath about the discourse of Hindutva. Was 'gerrymandering' a euphemism for the eventual partition of the country along lines drawn by religious communities?

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The above work constitutes a history of women's spirituality in South India from Sangam Tamils to the era of colonial transition. The author has tried to cover the different stages of women's spirituality - from their initiation into it as novices to the ultimate state of transcendence when the boundaries of caste, class and gender are transcended. She recognizes that there are several stages of spirituality: 'high spirituality is grounded in unselfish love and universal compassion; low spirituality is egoistic, oriented towards profit and power, and inspires fear and awe in people rather than love'. She includes the phenomenon of possession in spirituality and, as with low and high spirituality, looks upon it as either afflicted or ecstatic. While in afflicted possession the possessed person is captured by a spirit and is vulnerable to the commands of the spirit, ecstatic possession refers to the mystic trances of great sages.

Ramaswamy holds that spiritual women subvert the usual hierarchy of structure which thrives on gender-discrimination and gender exclusion. She sees spirituality as a means of empowerment of women both in its crude form, like in cases of possession where it enables them to break away from traditional roles, and in its more refined form through universal love which enables them to transcend all dichotomies. Powerful self-expression is one of the prominent characteristics of spiritual women. This enables them to stand out in history in the large expanse of male writing in which even women's voices are impersonated by the males. The songs of Mira, Akka Mahadevi or Andal are among the few documents which give us a peek into the feminine psyche.

Spiritual possession, according to Ramaswamy, is associated with women and men of low castes and occupations. In South India, apart from the virgins, barren and jilted women, and sometimes even murderous women, are worshipped. In this worship she sees the permeating influence of Dravidian folk beliefs. In this world view the spiritual powers of women were linked to the fear of pollution and the male fear of female sexuality. In the Sangam age women also derived their spiritual power from their marital status. This refers to the power born of chastity. Ramaswamy holds that Sangam literary sources indicate that both male and female

The Cathartic Counter-Culture of Female Spirituality

Rekha Jhanji

WALKING NAKED: WOMEN, SOCIETY, SPIRITUALITY
IN SOUTH INDIA

by Vijaya Ramaswamy

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spiritualism were associated with dead spirits and possession rather than with the transcendental aspects of spirituality. The worship of gods and goddesses was linked to the secular concerns of *akam* (love) and *puram* (war). Spirituality here was associated with power and pollution, and the Sangam situation can be seen as diametrically opposed to the Brahmanical patriarchal association of power and purity. This association of power with purity excluded women and the polluting castes from religious rituals and ended up spiritually disempowering them.

It is heartening to learn from the author that in the Sangam economy a female child was as welcome as a male child. Women enjoyed considerable autonomy vis-à-vis their marriage partners. Since the Sangam women largely enjoyed an equal status to their male counterparts - excepting the widows who lived in miserable condition - they may not have felt the need for social or spiritual transcendence.

According to Ramaswamy women were central to Sangam politics. Sangam age does not inspire the high spirituality of the transcendental variety born of a dissatisfaction with one's social environment. Even Auvaiyar in the Sangam age, a women saint poet who had opted out of marriage and family, was not a saint in the transcendental sense. Her concerns were worldly rather than transcendental. 'Hers was not the path of renunciation but active involvement in both "domestic" and "public" spheres. Anvaiyar's songs were in praise of patrons and kings and not in praise of Gods'.

Ramaswamy sees the period between third and seventh centuries A. D. as a golden age of heterodox faiths that provided the sacred space for the proliferation of spiritual women. Their decline in South India began with the Hindu Bhagavata movement and the devotional theism of Vaisnava and Saiva varieties. Wealth and power

corrupted the heterodox faiths and they gradually incorporated into their corpus the Brahmanical patriarchal values. The Bhagavata movement emerged in an ideological struggle against Buddhism and Jainism. Women took an active part in the revival of Hinduism but the Brahmanical patriarchal order finally led to the marginalization of women. This shift towards Hinduism is seen by Ramaswamy in terms of the changing socio-economic forces. By the seventh century A. D. the structure of South Indian society was transformed. The Bhagavata cult signified the influence of Sanskritization - absorbing some of the Dravidian gods.

The major characteristic of the devotional movements in South India was a confrontation with the heterodox schools. As a consequence of these polemics, Buddhism completely declined and Jainism shifted its locale to Karnataka. Mangaiyarkkarasiyar and Tilakanaiyarkkarasiyar played an important role in controlling the spread of Jainism and in establishing the supremacy of Saivism in the Pandyan region. Despite the emergence of Andal and Karaikkal as the two major women saints of the seventh century, the presence of women is only marginally felt in the entire Bhagavata movement. The *Periyapuranam*, a hagiological work on the Nayanar saints, has several references to women being sold, bartered, without any consideration of their personal preferences. Thus, by and large, women in the Bhagavata movement are only marginally visible - as devout wives/sisters/mothers - and their voices are almost inaudible. This gender imbalance as partially restored by Ramanuja in the eleventh century. With Ramanuja ended the first phase of the Bhagavata Movement in the Tamil country. In the beginning of his spiritual career, Ramanuja did seem to provide sacred space to both the marginalized sections of society -

women and lower castes.

The emergence of monasteries from the tenth century onwards was a major source of the further exclusion of women from the spiritual realm. Saiva and Vaisnava mutts kept women out of all monastic activities and do so till today. It is in the Virasaivite movement, which began in Karnataka in the twelfth century, that a radical posture was adopted in the spiritual field. It has the largest following amongst the females. In this movement the traditional paradigms were inverted.

The Virasaivite movement started with a rebellious stance but its anti-Sanskritization did not last beyond the twelfth century. Gradually patriarchal values entered into it and, as a consequence, gender inequalities began to emerge. Inscriptional and literary evidence indicate that all social inequalities of status within the home as well as the denial of property rights to women continued into the medieval period. Mallanna in the Warkari and Ramdasi panths are still alive, every year there is a pilgrimage undertaken by the Warkaris and Ramadasis to Pandarpur, Alandin, Dehu and Sajjandgod. Although this organized form of annual pilgrimage began only in the eighteenth century, even before that Wari processions did take place in June-July, January-February and November-December. There is a broad gender equality in the Warkari panth. The inclusion of compositions by both low and high-caste women indicates the radical potential in the Warkari panth. But Ramaswamy contends that despite the inclusion of women in the Warkari panth, its dominant ideology still remains in the framework of patriarchy. This ideology is visible in the writings of the Warkari saints. Jnaneswara makes an appeal about the equality of castes but also supports the customs of *sati* for women. He even expresses his pity for the widow who misses salvation by rejecting satihood. The voices of Ramdasi women are pale echoes of the voice of Ramadasa. Ramdasi women headed their monastic institutions but the rites of these monasteries were framed by Ramadasa. Brahmanical revival under the Peshavas reinforced the strength of patriarchy, thus women were once again forced out of the spiritual realm into the narrow walls of domesticity.

Ramaswamy concludes her exposition by a brief reference to the

colonial transition. She sees the Brahmanical imperial alliance in the early phase of the colonial era as a virtual black hole in women's spiritual history. However, the search for spiritual self-expression continued. Indian movement of independence and the anti-colonial stances that emerged in different parts of fourteenth century restored the patriarchal mores of subjugating women. Thus within the Virasaiva tradition the voices of women do not transgress patriarchy, they adhere to it both in terms of worship and in the use of spiritual idiom. The Siva Linga continues to be the supreme symbol of Virasaivism. However, Ramaswamy points out that despite their use of the spiritual idiom in the patriarchal format, the Virasaiva women did succeed in partially overturning patriarchy within the secular/worldly realm. Thus women like Akka Mahadevi and Akka Nagamma used the familiar symbolic language of patriarchy to overturn it. By their vocabulary which turned God into 'husband', they treated all men and women of the world as wives, thus shattering the social constructs of patriarchy at least for some time. These powerful female voices were finally integrated into the general patriarchal mould through the canonization of these women in religion and society.

The last regional movements studied by Ramaswamy is that of the Warkaris and the Ramdas. They are those people who undertake their annual Wari to the resting place (*samadhi*) of saints like Jnanesvara, Tukarama, Muktabai and Eknath. Her survey of the place of women within the Warkari panth stretches over a long historical span beginning with the Mahanuhbavas and ending with the Ramadas. It gives the impression of ambiguity in the status of spiritual women. Women within these movements were both vocal and visible, and yet the sacred spaces they occupied were the ones that had been conceded to them by men and not those that women had carved out for themselves.

One finds a consistent pattern in Ramaswamy's exposition of the saga of spiritual women in South India. Each time a heterodox faith arose, it provided a sacred space for women to express themselves but it gradually got confined and finally sucked into the larger Brahmanical pantheon. Ramaswamy sees Brahmanism as the principal

manifestation of the ideology of patriarchy and thus inimical to the freedom and autonomy of women. The factors that actually led to the reiteration of these Brahmanical values are not analysed in detail by Ramaswamy. One major reason noted by her is the economic factor. In the Sangam period it was the rise of an agrarian economy which led to the affirmation of patriarchy. Similarly, she attributes the decline of Buddhism and Jainism also to economic forces. She sees these sporadic expressions of women's spirituality as manifestations of a counter-culture which is cathartic in nature. They are short-lived because they are all swallowed by the monster of patriarchy. One feels a little dissatisfied with this kind of oversimplification in the analysis of the causes of emergence and decline of feminine narratives, especially because it is not in the style of Ramaswamy to give this kind of summary treatment. Her exposition of the various religious movements and women's participation in them is both systematic and vivid, which is why one expects a more sensitive treatment of the factors that first originated and then silenced this discourse. A detailed discussion of the reasons that led to the silencing of these female voices in different generations may help us in our efforts in the empowerment of women in our times.

Furthermore, despite recognizing the ultimate nature of spirituality in terms of transcendence, Ramaswamy does include in her concept of spirituality cases of possession, clairvoyance and clairaudience. She sees all these levels of spirituality as modes of empowerment of women. But while the empowerment of women in terms of possession temporarily elevates their social status, transcendental spirituality does not empower them in the same manner. For transcendental spirituality goes beyond any concern for mundane empowerment. She concedes that at this stage the person becomes genderless, but she does not recognize that power in the worldly sense has no relevance for a spiritually evolved person.

These minor problems apart, the book makes fascinating reading. There is a wealth of material on women's poetry from different periods of South Indian literature.

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Women's Question

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women's movement in recent years, feminist analysis of the role of law has exposed the patriarchal nature of legal formulations. Women's groups have not only actively campaigned for legal reform, they have also focused on the ways in which law is implicated in women's oppression. For instance, a number of legislative measures have been introduced in recent years to deal with violent crimes against women like rape and dowry deaths. Studies have shown that there has been a low conviction rate, especially in cases of dowry deaths, reasons for which range from the delays and inadequacies of police investigation to conservative attitude of the judiciary favouring a pro-statusquoist bias.

Undoubtedly, an impressive amount of innovative research has been done in feminist historiography, social anthropology, legal studies, the impact of economic policies on women and so on which have not only challenged the dominant frameworks and assumptions of the discipline but have shown revealing insights on gender relations. Despite such work, however, mainstream research and teaching have largely remained unaffected by these attempts. The gulf between academic research and activism that has widened over the years also threatens to dilute the original objective of introducing women's studies and its potential for being a critical discipline.

While the gap between the movement and women's studies has led to a depoliticized women's studies devoid of academic rigour and its potential for resistance, issues such as *sati*, the Muslim Women's Bill, the discussion on Uniform Civil Code in the last few years has led to debates on 'tradition', 'culture', 'caste', 'nationality', and 'modernization' within the women's movement, posing greater and newer challenges for women's studies. On the one hand, there is a demand for legislation that will assure justice in common for all women in our country; on the other, there is the argument that laws that unproblematically embody familiar notions of gender justice will exacerbate divisions among women and between women and other oppressed groups.

The rhetoric of equality itself has become problematic. The oppression shared by all women appears to overwhelm differences that exist between them. At the same time, however, the diversity among women due to caste, class, ethnicity

and religion, and the differences in their experience of oppression have made it problematic for all the layers of oppression to be subsumed under the category of Woman. The interplay between the women's question and the class and caste questions has been fraught with theoretical and organizational dilemmas. A recent example is the debate on the women's reservation bill (the proposed 81st Amendment Bill, 1997) that appears to position the issue as that of a perceived polarization between caste and gender.

As demands for increased political participation and rights and for a reconfiguration of gender roles are being articulated with increasing frequency, both the women's movement and women's studies have had to adopt an agenda emphasizing the cultural diversity and pluralism of Indian society in contrast with the earlier homogenizing concepts of certain nationalist and development perspectives. The threats of economic liberalization on the one hand, and of fundamentalism on the other, have unleashed forces that are aimed at eroding women's claims to equality, freedom and dignity as individuals. Increasingly women are being projected as consumers and reproductive beings rather than as producers; and as members of one community or another which seeks to establish its political identity by right of birth, religion or culture. The response to fundamentalism has brought in ideological cleavages within the women's movement that had always identified itself with a broad left activism.

Despite such a grim picture, what is heartening today is that there is an articulation of opposition and visibility of the struggle itself that women are waging for freedom and dignity. The new forms of self-expression and self-definition that women in our society today are seeking are evident not only in their grass-roots organizing around issues like environment, health care, anti-liquor campaign and so on, but also in their creative writings as well. These forms open up exciting possibilities for restructuring gender relations as well as for women to create a basis of worthiness other than that bestowed by the dominant culture.

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Stephen Greenblatt, along with co-editors Walter Cohen (the same Walter Cohen who criticized the new historicists not so very long ago for their 'bizarre' choice of historical exempla), Katherine Eisaman Maus and Jean Howard, have brought out the *Norton Shakespeare*, a handsome single-volume edition not only of Shakespeare's complete plays and poems, but also including Donald Foster's 1996 discovery, 'A Funeral Elegy' attributed to Shakespeare, sundry other pieces attributed to Shakespeare ranging from the two-line completion of Ben Jonson's mock epitaph composed on a night of inebriated camaraderie ('Here lies Ben Jonson... / Who while he lived was a slow thing, / And now, being dead, is nothing') or the eighteen-line Epilogue to Queen Elizabeth to the complete play *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (on which Shakespeare probably collaborated with John Fletcher) and a number of documents which refer to Shakespeare or to his plays, ranging from Robert Greene's famous 'upstart Crow' remark in *Groatsworth of Wit* to Gabriel Harvey's little-known observation that while the younger generation delights in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* Harvey feels *Hamlet* and 'Venus and Lucrece' have something in them 'to please the wiser sort' - Harvey's singling out of the poem may raise a few eyebrows. The texts are more or less based on the radical 1986 Oxford edition of Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, although the Norton editors have balked at using the Folio edition of *Hamlet* and putting all the Q2 passages, however well-known, into an appendix, or from replacing 'porpentine' with the modern 'porcupine' in the lines from *Hamlet* made famous by P. G. Wodehouse or from attributing certain scenes with the witches in *Macbeth* to Middleton, or from renaming Falstaff Sir John Oldcastle (the Oxford editors note that the change from the first performance was made on protests from Oldcastle's descendents, one of whom was Elizabeth I's Lord Chamberlain). However, like the Oxford editors, the Norton editors have called *Henry VIII* by its performance title of *All Is True*, they have the same 'brief account' the Oxford edition carries on Shakespeare's lost play *Gardenio*, they have included both the Folio and the Quarto editions of *King Lear*, although simultaneously printed on facing pages, as well as the better-known composite edition of the play

New Historicist Shakespeare

Shormishtha Panja

THE NORTON SHAKESPEARE

Edited by Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Katherine Eisaman Maus and Jean E. Howard

New York: Norton, 1997; 3420 pp; price not mentioned.

(which all editions prior to the Wells and Taylor Oxford have used.)

There is a readable and informative section on the Shakespearean stage by Andrew Gurr which gives one all the basic facts and figures of the playhouses and acting companies enlivened by detailed references to the plays themselves to illustrate particular tricks of architecture or seating or company hierarchy or inside jokes in the plays themselves referring purely to previous performances (the same actors probably played Brutus and Caesar in *Julius Caesar* and then Polonius and Hamlet in *Hamlet*; Polonius' remark to have played the part of Caesar at the university and Hamlet's subsequent

the excellent (Walter Cohen on *Anthony and Cleopatra*) and the annotations are brief - not a patch on the Arden edition - because Greenblatt did not want too much distracting 'whispering at the margins.' Thus the delight of long, erudite notes in which the editor compares first the Folio reading and then the Quarto and then emendations by Theobald and Warburton and Pope before deciding on his or her chosen version - notes which vividly brought to life the whole geometrical process of how a text is recreated after the author has abandoned it - are not to be found here. One also misses the Arden's generous appendix of sources. In these two cases, this

One of the delights of this edition is the number of illustrations from the sixteenth and seventeenth century which form their own visual commentary on the plays.

action of killing Polonius would have a number of proliferating meanings for the audience.). It also provides such information as the description of a raucous jig danced after a performance of what was probably *Julius Caesar* and which the playgoer, Thomas Platter, a German-speaking Swiss student, remembered with as much fondness as the play itself, or about a cloak that was supposed to designate invisibility in the list of props and costumes. This section contains valuable photographs of the Middle Temple Hall in which *Twelfth Night* was performed in 1602 and two photographs of the spanking new Globe theatre recently rebuilt in London. Another plus are the chronological tables of the kings and queens of England as well as a brief chronology of the important historical events in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth I and James I, tied together with italicized entries of pertinent events in Shakespeare's own life.

The introductions of the various plays vary in merit from the clunky (Jean Howard on *As You Like It*) to

edition would not be of much help to a postgraduate student - but the undergraduate and postgraduate readers would benefit from the long, readable introduction composed by Greenblatt where there is a lot of information under such sundry topics as imports, patents and monopolies, riot and disorder, the persecution of witches, the English and otherness in keeping with the new historicist enterprise of interest in the marginal and the quirkily historical. One of the delights of this edition is the number of illustrations from the sixteenth and seventeenth century which form their own visual commentary on the plays. These pictures range from that of a sixteenth-century Venetian dandy dressed in billowing pajamas to an engraving of female genitalia which makes them bear a startling resemblance to the male sexual organ to the Royal Exchange of London to an engraving of the Nile delta to a naked Negroid woman starting up in surprise from a hammock on seeing the fully dressed Columbus standing in front of her - the last a c1580 engraving called

America.

There are some surprises in the introductions and bibliographies. With commendable self-restraint Greenblatt contents himself with a brief mention of a sixteenth-century wizard John Dee whose library was mysteriously burnt down in the introduction to, you've guessed it, *The Tempest*. And wonder of wonders, Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* and C. L. Barber's *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* find mention in the brief bibliographies appended to the introductions of the various plays. There is a larger, more comprehensive bibliography at the end of the volume.

Some textual cruxes are rather surprisingly changed or left untouched. Greenblatt changes 'scamel' in *The Tempest* Caliban's 'I'll get thee / Young scamels from the rock' (II ii) to 'scamew.' The original reading to which Stephen Orgel gives a longish and convincing note in the Oxford edition - explaining that it could either mean sea-mew or sea-mel, a kind of gull, or *fort scamoux*, a native Patagonian fish - is more acceptable. One wonders whether the change may be due to Greenblatt's own observation in *Learning to Curse* about the opacity (read unintelligibility) of Caliban's language. 'Bellona's bridegroom' in *Macbeth* I ii is simply identified as Macbeth in the note whereas it could just as well be the earlier Thane of Cawdor.

The introduction to 'A Funeral Elegy' is a diligent piece of literary detective work, persuasively presented by the man who made the discovery, Donald Foster. Unfortunately, while one is all too ready to accept the textual evidence (a computer vocabulary match from an archive of more than twelve million words, archaic conjunctions, a taste for similar auxiliary verbs and the coining of compound words on the same pattern), the poem itself is the least persuasive part of Foster's argument. It sounds too tedious to be composed by Shakespeare - Foster tries to explain, with the help of Richard Abrams' article, that Shakespeare did not write the elegy better because he was tired of the usual tropes and poetic flourishes by the time of this, his final work. Surely, then, he would have written a much shorter elegy than the 578-line composition?

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Surely, it is surprising that not many books are being written today on Bharata's *Natya Sastra*, even though the text, in oral or written form, has been around for nearly two millenia. The text is, no doubt, massive, and sprawls over thirty-six chapters. Kapila Vatsyayan's *Bharata: The Natya Sastra*, written in the Biography series of Sahitya Akademi, a slim volume though, is nevertheless a welcome contribution to the study of Indian poetics. It raises some seminal questions: that is, it discusses the Indian textual tradition as involving both continuity and change, and tries to show how the overall structure of the text which looks seemingly like an 'aggregation' is, on the contrary, virtually controlled by an overarching vision- 'a vision with design and purpose'.

Who was Bharata? What is his identity as a person? Or is the name an acronym for the three syllables Bha (*bhava*), Ra (*raga*), and Ta (*tala*)? Of course, one can speculate on authorship against the tradition of anonymity that characterizes ancient Indian texts. Vatsyayan, however, proposes an alternative history to chronology. The text provides enough internal evidence to suggest how it locates itself in a *parampara*, a history of concepts or better, an intertextual matrix. The story becomes fascinating at this point as Vatsyayan uncovers the evidence, what the text commits, and what it significantly omits. That is, when the text is inserted into a genealogy of metaphors and concepts, both the commissions and omissions acquire new dimensions. While the commissions can yield a whole cultural network of concepts such as *purusa*, *yajna*, *bija*, *bindu*, *guna*, and *rasa*, thereby revealing the text's filiative links to earlier texts, what the text omits can become historically more significant. Of the sacred Trinity, for instance, only Brahma plays a prominent role in the text. Indra, the Vedic deity, comes only next in importance, even though the concept of *Natya* as such seeks its origins in the *anukirtana* (representation) of the mock-fights enacted in the 'flag-festival' as part of *Yajna* to celebrate Indra's victory over the demons. Siva appears marginally, but there is no mention of Nataraja nor any avatars of Visnu. Neither Ganesa nor Krsna or the *Rasa* dance figure in the text. And the way the text discusses the

The Multiple Voices of Bharata

TRS Sharma

BHARATA: THE NATYASASTRA

by Kapila Vatsyayan

New Delhi : Sahitya Akademi, 1996; x + 218 pp; Rs. 150.

construction of the playhouse and the stage indicates that it precedes temple construction. The text therefore seems to be post-Upanisadic, pre-Puranic, and prior to schools of philosophy. Now that is one kind, perhaps a more meaningful kind, of history for us.

Bharata evolves a theory of praxis, which he calls a *prayoga sastra*, for *sastra* and *prayoga* are not antonyms to him. His text adopts a unique mode of presenting the notion of *natya* (drama) through dialogue which he carries on with the sages. He thereby creates a fluid text, open-ended, with a built-in flexibility which would enable variant and multiple readings. In short, it is a text which many a post-modernist would dream of!

In the first half of the book, Vatsyayan weaves a rich and complex narrative, as she refers to a system of correspondences working within the text. The concepts discussed here which constitute the substantive part of the book are, as mentioned earlier, the Vedic notion of *yajna*, *purusa*, *bija*, and *rasa*. These are also the metaphors that hold the entire text together, and inform Bharata's notions of theatre, drama, and other performing arts.

The text must have come into being, the author observes, when the Vedas were still a living presence, and when mythology was still in the process of being made. The cosmology that Bharata uses is closely related to the notion of the Vedic *yajna*, which is a founding metaphor, because this 'analogy is carried right through his text.' Since Bharata is nearer to the Vedic sources, a whole milieu of Vedic deities appear, deities such as Varuna, Vayu, and Sarasvati, the goddess of *Vak* (speech or articulation). Though the notions of theatre and the stage are conceived by Bharata as an analogue of the ritual space of the Vedic *yajna*, his text introduces the notion of *puja* as a surrogate of *yajna*, *puja* as worship or salutation of the stage, not of any idol or image. This form of *puja*

becomes obligatory - it sacralizes the stage and infuses it with life and momentary presence as against the ontological absence. Bharata provides a basic framework for the theatre through the categories of *angika*, *vacika*, *aharya*, *sattvika*, and *itivirtta* - which are respectively body-language, words or dialogue, decor, emotive states and what might roughly be called plot (but literally meaning 'as it happens').

Bija is another such founding metaphor which looks upon the world as an organism and creates a nexus with man's emotive states, with a mind-body experience refined in *rasa*. A unifying thread of logic runs from the world as organism through theatre, through the arts, to the performativity of verbal and body-language. *Rasa*, surely a founding metaphor of the *Natya Sastra*, with an astonishing range of meanings from the mystical to the gustatory, and developed as a 'psycho-somatic system' by Bharata, does not, however, get its due share of discussion in the book, because the author feels, perhaps rightly, that since so much has been written on *rasa*, the theory needs no further elaboration. But then, that there can be other possibilities for the theory of *rasa* or whether this theory can be redefined, or can have any claim to contemporaneity is not addressed by the author.

The author divides the work into explicit and implicit texts. While the explicit text deals with architecture (as in building the playhouse), body-language, dramaturgy, music, painting, poetry, and rhetoric, to name only a few of the topics, and uses a pan-Indian vocabulary, the implicit text deals with intertextual concepts and resonances, and is essentially interdisciplinary in character. It appropriates concepts from astronomy, mathematics, medicine and yoga, apart from the Upanisads. The text significantly 'moves within the parameters of a world-view which subscribes to the four goals of life, the four *purusarthas* and the four *asramas*.' Of the four

purusarthas, *kama* as desire and love, moves in an explicit manner to the centre of Bharata's concern. And it is under this category that the senses, body, mind and consciousness configure. Under the category of desire as the principal motive of human enterprise involved in the gaining of any or all of the *purusarthas*, Bharata's interest in taxonomy focuses on the act of enumerating types of men, of heroes and heroines and man's emotive states. Further, his extreme sensitivity to body-language enables him to link 'consciousness, mind and feeling' to gait, to even 'facial muscle' as it contracts or relaxes under tension or release.

While the *asramas* mentioned above are implicitly appropriated, the text does, however, make a clean break with the *varna* hierarchy in order to create what Bharata terms the Fifth Veda accessible to all irrespective of caste or gender.

While the sheer metaphors of the theatre, as discussed by the author, throws ample light on various constellations of myth and concept working within the text, and manifest through Bharata's multiple voices, the sections in the latter half of the book suffer from an inadequacy of interpretation. Concepts in Bharata always appear in clusters, often as correlates of other concept clusters inhering in different but allied domains of discourse, and one witnesses a series of homologies working at different levels of the text, but the size of the book under review can hardly do justice to them. Many of the concepts are left hanging out as it were, and no vital links are worked out with the core metaphors earlier affirmed. This part seems to need a much deeper engagement with the conceptual grammar of the text. Furthermore, a frequent use of romantic, flowery or foggy locutions such as 'the text came into being from the perennial well-spring of the eternal snows of thought' or 'the fountainhead and source for other simultaneously running streams,' detracts from the weight of the argument and precision of thought. However, the book succeeds in opening up a whole field for further investigation and convinces the reader of the infinite riches remaining buried in the outsized, mammoth text of the *Natya Sastra*.

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In India, there have been two identifiable strands in feminist literary scholarship. One has dealt with resurrecting and bringing together primary texts written by women (such as *Women Writing in India from 600 BC to the Present*), and the other is an increasing corpus of essays and book-length studies on women's writing. Malashree Lal's book *The Law of the Threshold* clearly belongs to the latter category but with one important difference. While many of these works are descriptive summaries with few theoretical underpinnings, Lal subjects selected texts to rigorous analysis, placing them within the context of their production as well as finding the connections that link them in an identifiable tradition.

Lal traces a tradition of Indian women's writing in English over a period of 150 years ranging from Toru Dutt to Bharati Mukherjee. She unearths Toru Dutt's unpublished and little-known novel *Bianca*. In addition, she discerns a recurrent pattern that runs through works as disparate as Toru Dutt's *Bianca* and Sarojini Naidu's poetic and prose works to Bharati Mukherjee's postmodern picaresque, *Jasmine*. This underlying pattern is the crossing of the threshold - a literal and metaphoric space that becomes the locus and symbol of female creativity. This specific experience of crossing the threshold, from the private to the public, from home to the world, spaces traditionally apportioned and assigned according to gender, is what constitutes the specific hallmark of Indian women's writing in English. But one might argue that this would be true of all women's writing, not just the writing of Indian women.

For instance, in 'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness', an article published in 1982, Elaine Showalter, the renowned American critic, made a distinction between 'feminist critique' and 'gynocritics'. By 'feminist critique' she meant looking at the images and stereotypes of women in literature by male writers - in short, it meant looking at texts from the point of view of the woman as a reader. 'Gynocritics' on the other hand present women as writers, resurrecting lost or forgotten works, tracing traditions of women's writing and identifying recurring patterns on the basis of which these traditions can be founded. In *The Law of the Threshold*, then, Lal's critical enterprise is recognizably 'gynocritical'.

A Toe Over the Threshold

Asha S. Kanwar

THE LAW OF THE THRESHOLD: WOMEN WRITERS IN INDIAN ENGLISH

by Malashree Lal

Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1995; 167 pp; Rs. 175.

This is not to suggest that Lal uncritically follows Showalter's lead nor is her work anglocentric. Western scholarship forms an inevitable part of any English teacher's critical repertoire, especially a teacher like Lal who has taught and researched widely in North America. Basing her analysis on available insights and a sound knowledge of her own cultural context, Lal breaks new ground in formulating an 'Indocentric approach' to which she devotes an entire chapter.

The distinctive quality of Indian women's writing is that the 'writing women' do not have to proclaim their radicalism - the very act of writing is transgression, crossing of the 'archetypal *Lakshman rekha*', to use Lal's phrase. The articulation of an 'extraordinary consciousness of selfhood' from within a culture of silence is in itself a subversive act. Basing the novels on first-hand experience, the writers featured in the book have produced fiction that is disguised autobiography with the sole exception of Sarojini Naidu who moves from the private domain of poetry to the public domain of political rhetoric. It is from the title of Naidu's first collection of poems, *The Golden Threshold* - which subsequently became the name of her gracious home in Hyderabad - that the title of Lal's book derives.

It is well-known that women's lives are often disguised in what can be seen as 'masked autobiographies'. While this may be the surface structure, it seems to me that what emerges is a genre of writing that is a cross between autobiography, confessional, domestic realism and fantasy. The disguise works at several levels, as Lal perceptively points out, for it is the 'public' aspects of 'private sphere that the writers discuss, but never the strictly 'private'. For instance, sexuality is never overtly discussed. It is here that the Indian woman writer is different from her Western counterpart who articulates aspects of the 'wild zone' of female experience as Shirley Ardener would put it. Kate Millett says that the writer must be 'shameless'. But the

Indian woman writer more often than not still hesitates to take the writerly license and cross the threshold into socially 'forbidden' areas. And it is only in recent times that overt references to sexuality such as in the works of Shobha Dé have begun to get into print in the subcontinent.

It is because of these cultural constraints that Lal does not use the word 'feminist'. As she points out, there is often a strong resistance to it as being synonymous with the West, or with stridency or separatism. Therefore she uses more neutral terms such as 'the woman question', or 'women's studies'. Even though she uses the gynocritical method, she charts her own course within the terrain of women's writing in India, fine-tuning Western critical methods to indigenous concerns. In short, in place of an 'oppositional' position, Lal suggests an 'alternative' perspective to facilitate women's studies in India. The Western binary opposition of male/female cannot be used in the Indian context since, within the subcontinent, it was male thinkers who spearheaded the women's movement. As such, the woman question in India has traditionally been neither separatist nor oppositional. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, writing in the 1920s, had said that the Indian women's movement 'cannot in any sense be said to be a rebellion or revolt against man.' While times have changed, and revolt rather than reform is seen as a more effective strategy among marginalized groups, there are still a large number of women who would opt for moderation and balance. It is from within this perspective that Lal speaks in her even-toned scholarly voice.

While the methodology of the 'law of the threshold' can be used for analysing fictional and non-fictional works, Lal restricts her choice to six 'writing women'. She also maintains a balance between the more high-profile Ruth Jhabvala, Sarojini Naidu, Anita Desai and Bharati Mukherjee and the somewhat less visible writers like Toru Dutt and Rama Mehta. While

all these authors are far apart in terms of time, space and literary practice, there is a certain commonality in their profiles. All of them are urban, middle or upper class educated women, and therefore relatively 'elite'. Unlike their sisters writing in Hindi and the regional languages, these writers are also catering to a Western audience, just as Lal does in her patient and elaborate explanations of words like *antahpur* and *ordhni*. In addition, Lal's critical work comes out at a particular historical moment when there is a great deal of interest in writings by women. Even though, as it happens, the responsibility for sustaining this interest devolves upon the efforts of critics who are also women.

Lal's book is a valuable addition to criticism on women's writing in India. Especially at a time when there are plenty of summaries masquerading as criticism, Lal's analytical and insightful essays will be a useful critical resource for anyone working not only in literature but in cultural and historical discourses as well. Lal traces a tradition of women writers based on the 'law of the threshold' that is original, thought-provoking and an important formulation in feminist theory. Her methodology, whereby biographical text becomes the context against which literary works are read, provides a useful blueprint for feminist critical practice. For most studies of women's writing, biographical knowledge is quite central. While such knowledge certainly illuminates certain aspects of the text, does it not also limit the plurality and play of different discourses within the text, one might ask. Or, does the Barthesian 'death of the author' proclaim the demise of the male author only? For as long as the biographical approach remains the staple of a feminist criticism, especially in the classroom, the woman author will continue to defy 'death'.

Whatever our position regarding the relative merits of different critical approaches, we would agree that Lal's book is an important input into the questions of what it means to be a (middle/upper-middle class) woman in India, what it means to be a 'writing woman', and finally, what it means to be an Indian woman writing in English.

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The present collection comprising nineteen essays on postcolonial theory evokes the critic Bill Ashcroft's metaphor 'verandahs of meaning', though not necessarily in the original context of the excess of theory. The essays, disparate and wide-ranging, represent some of the myriad formulations and theorizings on the meaning, scope and validity of the term 'postcolonial'. Indeed, the editor Mongia asserts, the collection, far from attempting to wind up the ever-growing debate on postcolonialism, seeks to 'explore and interrogate the arguments of different positions' in it. This is in order, the collection being designed in the form of a 'Reader', a 'selection of key articles' by critics including currently celebrated ones like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi Bhabha and Aijaz Ahmed, to name a few.

As with most political criticism, any attempt to define the post-colonial is to hazard attacks from various quarters - First-World (read Anglo-American) critics, Third-World critics, First-World critics with nostalgic Third-World roots and Third-World critics vehemently opposed to First-World critics' 'invention' and grabbing of postcolonialism. The disagreement over defining the term goes cheek by jowl with a disagreement over its scope. Perhaps never has there been so much critical debate - at times virulent and scathing - on a discourse, on its very *raison d'être*. Postcolonialism is at once celebrated as a powerful oppositional, revisionist discourse and denounced either as a dangerous neo-orientalist, neo-colonialist, homogenizing-globalizing tool of Western academics or as a 'pernicious fiction' as described by the African writer Ama Ata Aidoo. Yet others debate on whether to hyphenate 'post-colonial' or to leave it a composite word, thereby semantically problematizing it further. And then there are postcolonial critics like the Australian authors of the *The Empire Writes Back* (1987) who conflate the two terms 'colonial' and 'post-colonial' into one uninterrupted 'imperial process'. Again, a ferociously analyzed area of the postcolonial is the location site of its production, Third-World critics being wary of its production in the powerful Western academies.

The editor assures us that all these warring voices, more than comprising a disorderly company, initiates us into the 'powerful

Mapping Postcolonialism

Liza Das

CONTEMPORARY POSTCOLONIAL THEORY: A READER

Edited by Padmini Mongia

Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997; 407 pp; Rs.550.

contending forces and disputes which swirl around the term and its uses. Postcolonialism is a retaliatory cultural critique of the West's representation of the once-colonized countries. As Mongia frames it, it is not 'a simple periodization but ... a methodological revisionism which enables a wholesale critique of Western structures of knowledge and power, particularly those of the post-Enlightenment period'. The 'Introduction' addresses most of the above concerns though it rather defensively parries the issue of the resistance to globalization by declaring that the collection is a selection of contemporary postcolonial theory currently in circulation in Anglo-American academia. Almost all the essays here were first published in books and journals whose copyrights lie with Anglo-American institutions.

The essays are grouped in three structural parts which are not mutually exclusive but allow for considerable fluidity. 'Shifting Terrains' opens with excerpts from Edward Said's pioneering work *Orientalism* (thankfully the only excerpted work in this collection) by way of both introducing the topic and opening the debate. Focusing on the representation of the Orient as 'Other', Orientalism is at once a branch of area studies, a style of thought, but, most importantly, a Western hegemonic discourse and 'corporate institution' for 'dealing with ... dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient'. Said makes the radical assertion that knowledge is never 'automatically nonpolitical', that scholars in the humanities can never be totally objective in practice, thereby rejecting the naive view that the various branches of literary criticism are simply different, objective ways of looking at texts. Homi Bhabha's essay 'The Other Question' questions Said's thesis that colonial discourse is solely possessed by colonizers. Analyzing Frantz Fanon's *Black Skins, White Masks* he argues that colonial stereotypes are always problematic and 'ambivalent'. An interesting study of the parallels between the

commodification of Oriental art as a 'neo-traditional genre' and the practising of postcolonialism by a mediating, 'comprador intelligentsia' of Western-trained writers is made by Kwame Anthony Appiah. Stephen Slemon insists that 'Second World' white-settler texts should also be included in the postcolonial canon. Benita Parry's essay seeks to consider afresh the idea of nativism, especially the anti-colonial concept of Negritude, and explores Fanon's problematical relationship to it. Both Stuart Hall and Rey Chow's essays deal with 'identity', a beleaguered area in postcolonial studies. Hall's contention is that identity is an ever-shifting and incomplete 'production', and Chow's argument is that anti-colonial texts may themselves lead to a double exploitation of the native.

From the conceptual thrust of the first section, one enters the 'real' material world of 'Disciplining Knowledge'. Barbara Christian's single-endnote essay 'The Race for Theory' is refreshingly different and makes the courageous statement that we often choose to brush under the carpet: 'critics are no longer concerned with literature, but with other critics' texts'. She argues that black feminist critics are 'devalued' when they choose not to theorize in the terminology of the 'Western form of abstract logic', and thus stand a poor chance of availing institutional grants and funding. Similar discrimination, Biodun Jeyifo maintains, exists in relation to 'native' African critics vis-à-vis their Western 'Africanist' counterparts. Chandra Talpade Mohanty's 'Under Western Eyes' challenges Western feminism's essentialization of Third-World women as the 'colonization' of the latter's heterogeneities. She analyzes books on women in the 'Women in the Third World' series published by the Zed Press. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak cautions postcolonialists against becoming perpetrators, willy-nilly, of a 'new Orientalism'. Her essay also includes an analysis of Mrinal Sen's *Genesis*. Dipesh Chakrabarty's excellent essay 'Postcoloniality and the

Artifice of History' exposes the inherent Eurocentrism in most discourses of historiography. He calls for a program of 'provincializing' Europe but warns that this would be no simple process given the academic protocols of Western universities. Paul Gilroy's piece on 'new racism' shows how the issue of racism in contemporary Britain is sought to be subsumed under the interests of nationalism.

The siting of postcolonial studies is the focus of the final section 'Locating Practice'. In 'The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality', Aijaz Ahmed sees postcolonialism in literary theory as only a 'rechristening' of what used to be known as 'Third-World literature', and that postcolonial studies had begun in the 1970s in the realm of political theory. Taking issue with the postcolonial 'triad' of Said, Bhabha and Spivak, he argues that such critics, sited in First World universities, make the dubious claim of possessing the 'truest eye' on account of their cultural 'hybridity' (Bhabha's term). He also fears that postcolonialism has been stretched too far to include too many things. Arif Dirlik makes the saucy statement that postcolonialism begins 'when Third-World intellectuals have arrived in First-World academe'. He replaces Appiah's idea of the 'comprador intelligentsia' with his notion of the global capitalist intelligentsia. The globalizing - both spatial and temporal - of postcolonialism ought to be corrected with a historically, culturally and geopolitically specific context to it, proposes Ella Shohat. This view is broadly shared by Ruth Frankenberg and Lata Mani who argue for a 'politics of location' to best understand the varieties of the postcolonial, and posit a 'feminist conjuncturalist approach'. The final essay by Rosemary Jolly analyses the gaps in trying to accommodate constructs of contemporary Western postcolonial theory to post-apartheid South Africa.

What emerges from these essays is a tortuous but lively debate among the contributors who, despite being clubbed together in sections, speak across boundaries to one another. Given its nature and its contemporaneity, the mapping of the postcolonial, the demarcation of its borders, cannot perhaps be worked out in the immediate future. More uncharted territories and cultural forms will clamour for

Contd. on page 25

The imperial connection is never missing. While at this end the celebrations marking fifty years of India's independence, planned and re-planned with feverish bureaucratic and political obsession, have hardly taken off, at the other end our erstwhile (is it really erstwhile, given neo-colonialism?) imperial connection has already set the ball rolling. The well-known literary journal, *Granta* has come out with a special issue, *India: The Golden Jubilee*, and given fillip to others like *The New Yorker* and *The National Geographic* that have brought out special features on India. The nation, after all, had, in Nehru's memorable phrase, its 'tryst with destiny.' Whether the pledge has been redeemed within these fifty years is a question that haunts the public mind, bringing in a sense of responsibility and foreboding. Such apprehensions have been articulated in various forms of writing since colonial times, both by Indian and British writers. The British interface with India gave rise to various ambivalent positions which are the texts and subtexts of colonial discourse.

The *Granta* anthology is fairly representative of the colonial and post-colonial voices providing insights into the moments that history has reckoned with or passed by. This India number is edited by Ian Jack, an old India hand, who, in his Introduction, refers to the transformation of Indian society since independence - the initial period when Nehruvian socialism informed the state and civil society and the fading of that vision with the changing character of the political class. Then came the authoritarian phase of the Emergency and the subsequent years of social upheaval in the wake of the refashioning of identity on religious, regional and communal lines; the economic redistribution and appropriation, which, though bringing a certain amount of prosperity to the middle classes, also resulted in stark disparities between the affluent and the underprivileged. Jack's remarks remind us of Chomsky who, on his visit to India last year, found the vulgar ostentation of the Delhi elite astonishing, something he could not find among the affluent in America.

In her article 'Blood', Urvashi Butalia gives a moving account of the travails and trauma of partition, based on personal reminiscences, in

The Empire Looks On

Satish C. Aikant

Granta 57

INDIA: THE GOLDEN JUBILEE

Edited by Ian Jack

London: Granta Publications, 1997; 288 pp., Rs. 395.

which her own family was divided. The separation dogged, and irreversibly shaped, the destinies of thousands of 'refugees' who had crossed the borders, leaving part of their 'selves' behind. Butalia recalls that 'partition was not, even in my family, a closed chapter of history - that its simple, brutal political geography influenced and divided us still' (p. 16). She writes of her uncle Rana, who opted to stay back in Pakistan, and of how it took her many years to overcome her ambivalent feelings toward him, her sense of betrayal. When she actually visits him in Pakistan, he tells her about his conversion to Islam on account of his insecurities. Official pressures were taking a toll on personal lives, making people diffident and apprehensive in an alien dispensation. The sense of alienation of those like Rana was not in the least mitigated by their conversion, as they came to realize that they belonged neither to their old faith and people nor to their adopted community. In most cases, the act of conversion was not out of conviction but merely to buy truce in a hostile atmosphere. These apprehensions are shared not only by those traumatized by the partition. For many, freedom has come without its blessings. Living in soulless cities and going through the daily drudgery, the vast majority of people experience life in the lack of freedom. This is poignantly conveyed through several black-and-white pictures interspersed in the book along with the comments of men and women, common and uncommon. Narayani, a domestic worker from Madras, has this to say: 'the country has changed now; there are all sorts of bad people. I don't like it. I don't do anything except my work. I just stay in this house. I don't want to meet anyone. I just don't feel like it' (p. 32).

Suketa Mehta's 'Mumbai' captures the complex character of the city, the aftermath of the demolition of Babri Masjid, the communal riots it triggered, the series of bomb blasts that disturbed

the peace of Bombay forever, and the rise of fundamentalist forces among Muslims on the one hand, and among the Hindus in the Shiv Sena led by its supreme Balasaheb Thackeray on the other. The riots shattered the hub of the city's commercial life. Bombay had a sort of life that had shown tremendous vitality whether it be in the slums of Dharavi or in the elite Malabar Hills. This had given the city a character somewhat different from the rest of the country. The author writes about the city: 'it regards the rest of India much as Manhattan looks on the rest of America: as a place distant, unfamiliar and inferior. The lament I kept hearing from both Hindus and Muslims - was that the riots were an ungentle reminder that Bombay was part of India' (p. 117).

R. K. Narayan is perhaps the most unself-conscious novelist who uses English in a very Indian way, capturing the nuances of the Indian experience in a perfectly natural manner. 'Kabir Street' is an extract from his forthcoming novel, a sequel to *The World of Nagaraja*. Narayan retains the flavour of his earlier writings, rendering the drama of common life with a disarmingly simple and comical-ironic vision. Mark Tully is another India hand, who probably knows India better than most Indians do. In an autobiographical account called 'My Father's Raj' Tully writes about his childhood in India, his education in India and Britain, his return to India on a BBC assignment, and his overwhelming love for this country. We learn of his growing up and his love-hate relationship with his father, a typical 'boxwallah' in British Calcutta. Tully was distrustful of his father's rigid principles - his cold, aloof manners, and the exclusivist English values. In contrast, he considers himself more of an Indian: 'India is where I have lived almost constantly since. My zeal for it began as a reaction to my father's insistence that England was my home, the place I belonged to, the country that made me. For me, it turned out to be India that

supplied those feelings, that anchorage' (p. 145) - perhaps a lesson for our diasporic writers, lamenting their supposed loss of 'identity'. Ved Mehta, in 'Coming Down' reminisces his early years in India. With his prejudices intact, he is not unlike Naipaul, for his supposed refinements do not seem to come about without corresponding denigrations. Here is an example: 'since I had learned to enjoy western operas, Indian singing sounded to me a little like the whine or a mosquito' (152). It should go to the credit of Ved Mehta that he taught himself western music, but if he is completely ignorant about the subtleties of Indian classical music, should he reveal the biases of his colonial mind?

In 'After Gandhi' Trevor Fishlock dwells on the phenomenon of Gandhi, his hagiography, his hold on the masses and the way he could mobilize them against the mighty British. But Fishlock is careful not to miss the Mahatma's astute eye for symbolism, as for instance in leading the great Salt March in defiance of the British Indian laws. Gandhi influenced the civil society in a way no other popular leader in history has, and the author acknowledges: 'it remains a matter of wonder that, in its struggle for freedom, India poured its mass of contradictions, prejudices, divided loyalties and hopes not into some swaggering warrior, some thundering orator, some budding dictator, but into a stick-like ascetic in a loin cloth, neither saint nor soldier, sometimes cranky, difficult and wrong, who travelled third class, believed himself to be God's instrument and, also a reformer, took on India, its traditions and divisions, as well as the British' (p. 169). Ironically, this great soul is now like a faded photograph on the wall for his legacy is all but forgotten in a ritualistic commemoration.

The contemporary social fragmentation in terms of casteism is illustrated through 'Caste Wars' by William Dalrymple who finds Bihar degenerating into the Dark Ages, an observation many of us will not disagree with. The book has also reproduced a few pages of V. S. Naipaul's Bombay diary. One can see that Naipaul did try to understand India, but it would have needed more patience. His comment, 'it takes time to learn and look at India', does not redeem his summary judgements in *An Area of Darkness* and *India: A Million*

Mutinies Now. Nirad Chaudhuri's piece, 'My Hundredth Year' is yet another exercise in self-indulgence, and an apology - the *raison d'être* for his writings. His *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* had raised hackles on account of its dedication to the 'memory of the British Empire in India.' Chaudhuri thinks that the criticism was unwarranted and born of a basic misconception about his book.

Philip Knightley, who was associated with the Bombay magazine *Imprint* in its early years, writes in 'An Accidental Spy' how in the early sixties he became, unwittingly, a part of the covert operations of the CIA (*Imprint* was a front for them) and was wooed by KGB agents for all the wrong reasons. Jan Morris, in 'Clive's Castle', links Clive's fortunes, his ambitions and his unscrupulous ways, to the then British Mission in India: 'It was an Empire, by and large, without ideology.... For the most part their loftiest motive was Clive's loftiest too - the patriotic motive - and their basest was his too - to get rich quick' (p. 253).

An objective and dispassionate assessment of Arundhati Roy's first novel *The God of Small Things* can be possible only after all the media-generated hype around it subsides, when one will be able to see the work for what it is. The extracts published in the anthology do not reveal much, except for her deft use of language and its spontaneity. The anthology has two poems, one, 'What we lost' by Michael Ondaatje who recreates a charming old world giving way to the inexorable demands of change, and the other is 'Sampati' by Vikram Seth. It is a short, haiku-like poem, but is not as evocative, and the imagery is constrained. The selection, on the whole, makes good reading, though the colonial bias shows. It is a pity no translation from any of the Indian languages is included, though there is a significant *oeuvre* in these, both in literary and non-literary fields. Perhaps the omission is deliberate. And why not, if Macaulay's mission finds a promoter in Salman Rushdie (see his article in *The New Yorker* of 23 and 30 June 1997, which also shows a truncated map of India), who valorizes the English language, implicitly privileging the structures it embodies. The Empire rules the roost.

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Summerhill

An Essay on Time

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Thompson's statement virtually empties the word human of all actual or possible substance.

Consider in this context the great perplexity of the modern situation. While seeking time as the marker of progress upon which all significance is predicated, in certain modern contexts, time that negates linear progression is meticulously nurtured.

To this one could add a related perplexity of another kind. Anthropology seems content to merely outline as to how survival of time that negates linear progression in the West is akin to the much more substantial survivals of that in say, India or Algeria. Further, the way that such survival continues to persist in non-Western societies may have something to teach the modern West. For some strange reason such survivals are often designated as 'indigenous'. One respects the implicit disposition of sympathy towards, to use that awkward and culturally inane expression, the 'Third World'. But that by itself cannot furnish firm philosophical or even anthropological basis for enlarging the ambit of such survivals in modern life.

The true significance of the persistence of a sense of time that negates linear progression is perhaps to be sought precisely in realms that modern theory and life dare not entirely negate. Painting and poetry are artifacts as different in appearance as any two human artifacts perhaps can be. But they both affirm the logic and sheer power of form. A poem signifies, in the words of Octavio Paz, 'human utterance frozen in time'. Poetry, like painting is a human happening but it is a happening that could never have a pre-history. Their power to speak and possess far beyond the bounded contexts of their origins stems from the unalterable freezing of a particular sequence of words and sounds in a poem, of lines and colours in a painting that invokes that ineffable sense of an eternal presence. It is that which imparts to the artistic form a resilience beyond the reach and might of institutions and structures of entrenched power.

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The Many Meanings of Freedom

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attitudes are incapable of fighting the new materialism called communalism where religion becomes not the guide to the lone soul in the dark but a ploy in the hands of day-to-day power politics, a way not to salvation but to sabotage of the most destructive and inhuman kind.

One can fight this evil only from the higher spiritual ground where all created beings are able to hear one another's call, one another's silence, and share a platform of equality. I am referring to the other discourse where the tree gets involved with the earth, the other tongue in which water speaks to the wind, the wind to air, the air to the sky, the flower to the bee, the beast to the woods and man to all of them. My more recent poems, not only the ones on saint poets like Namdev, Kabir, Meera, Tukaram, Basava, Akka Mahadevi and Andal, but even the ones on my language and region and my travels inside and outside, emerge from the borders of these two languages: the one that bargains with the visible and the one that converses with the invisible. Perhaps I still have a long way to go to realize that alter-language of the spirit where freedom breaks free of its bondage to itself.

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Mapping Postcolonialism

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attention and appropriation within its parameters.

However, despite so many disagreements, a definite sense of the postcolonial does emerge out of this collection, and will certainly set the discerning reader thinking about his/her individual relation to the postcolonial. In particular, this book is a scholars' delight: it is a timely publication, has no truncated essays and is equipped with a useful bibliography. However, after going through so many deliberations on subject positions and the sites and politics of scholarly production, one misses the usual brief note on contributors. Considering the price of the book, the quality of the print is somewhat disappointing.

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The Many Worlds of Indian History

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NCERT books: combined with constant attention to teaching methods, they do seem geared towards much more classroom discussion and creative assimilation.[...]

What is needed is not just more effective channels of communication through which high academic wisdom can be disseminated downwards, but efforts to democratize also the production of historical knowledge, to work towards a new kind of historical culture. There is a need to pioneer ways of developing interaction among researchers, teachers, and activists drawn from, or working among, diverse social strata. On a long-term scale, collaborative research works and textbooks could emerge, enriched by multiple social and pedagogical experiences, and based on a mutual reformulation of perspectives.[...] Surely we can agree that the many worlds of Indian history must not be allowed to fly totally apart, as the social base of producers and intended audiences of front-ranking South Asian scholarship narrows, even while reaching out towards global horizons.

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The Place of Tradition

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it is generally true that every Indian sociologist begins as if there has been no work done by Indians before, this is particularly true of those who set out to take the Indian tradition as their point of departure. [...]

There is a large and yawning gap in time and context between the tradition that is invoked and the purpose for which, it is invoked, rendering largely fictitious that sense of filiation which is an essential part of tradition as an active principle. It is obvious that the appeal to tradition serves a rhetorical purpose; but it is doubtful that it contributes anything of value to the method of sociological enquiry.

ANDRÉ BÉTEILLE, one of India's most distinguished sociologists, is the author of several books including *Caste, Class and Power* and *Inequality Among Men*.