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EDITORIAL PREFACE

After producing a substantial double volume to commemorate two significant events in 1998/99, the Editorial Board has brought out a number that is more modest in scale while still maintaining the standard that is consonant with *The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*. The preface to the previous issue mentioned that younger academics seemed reluctant to write articles for this journal. Although this problem is by no means resolved, it is encouraging that more than half the contributors to this first issue for the new millenium have never previously published in *SLJH*. Then again, *SLJH* was once more successful in implementing the policy adopted in recent years of including contributors from within and without Peradeniya. Four of the nine essays published were submitted by academics from overseas.

Alan Strathern's is an engaging piece of research that has unearthed details about Queirós that were hitherto unknown or neglected. Chelva Kanaganayakam's article discloses how the conjoining of politics and literature in Sri Lanka "has resulted in configurations that one could not have anticipated." Mark Whitaker's vividly written essay undertakes the challenging task of comparing the intellectual practices of Western academics with those of one of his "colleagues" in Batticaloa. He examines the two approaches in relation to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "practice" in *Outlines of a Theory of Practice*. S.W. Perera focusses on the manner in which three writers from Sri Lanka, Kenya and Barbados respond to colonial education and the neo-colonial variety that replaced it. R.D. Gunaratne for his part traces the multifarious issues pertaining to Science Fiction from its origins and concludes that this form will play an increasingly important role "as educative literature" in the future. Though conceptualised as a "note" and not as a fully-fledged article, Nayar's contribution analyses William Wordsworth's "Michael" as an "exercise in Proxemics." This issue also includes reviews on Ananda Kulasuriya's *Sambudu Udana* and Anita Desai's *Fasting, Feasting*, and *Diamond Dust and Other Stories* by Ratna Handurukanda and Carmen Wickramagamage, respectively. D.P.M. Weerakkody's third cumulative author index covers all contributions to *SLJH* from volume XVI to XXV.

The Editor notes with regret the death of yet another distinguished ex-Peradeniya academic, Prof. Alfred Jeyaratnam Wilson. When I invited him to contribute to our last, special issue, he promptly responded with an essay that became its lead article. Since the printing of the journal was interrupted for several reasons, Professor Wilson quipped in a personal communication that if publication were further delayed it would not be an article by him but an epitaph on him. The journal, fortunately, appeared two months before his demise which makes his paper on Sri Lanka's four constitutions perhaps the last he has published.

Not all transitions brought unhappiness in 2000. *SLJH's* Editorial Board was reconstituted in the year under review. While some members of the previous Board remained, new personnel from several disciplines were appointed to succeed those who had completed their term. We thank the members of the previous Board for their support over the years and welcome their successors.

RE-READING QUEIRÓS: SOME NEGLECTED ASPECTS OF THE *CONQUISTA*

Historians of Sri Lanka owe a great deal to a brief encounter between a young Portuguese Jesuit and an elderly lay-brother by the name of Pedro de Basto in Cochin in November 1635. Fernão de Queirós,[1] at the tender age of eighteen, had just made the arduous journey from Portugal to India for the first time. Pedro de Basto's official position may have been a humble one but his reputation shone far and wide and Queirós felt honoured and exhilarated by this conversation with him. Much later Queirós would remember warmly, "the way he welcomed me, the advice that he gave me, the news which he very frankly communicated to me, even though I was still very young and in the first years of the Company."[2] This news may well have been about what would happen to Queirós in years to come. For Pedro de *Basto* was famous on account of his remarkable gift for prophecy. He lead a life replete with visions: of what was happening many hundreds of miles away, of what would happen after his death, of Heaven and Hell, angels and devils and Christ himself. He became a routine port-of-call for navigators enquiring as to how they would fare in their next planned expedition. Many years after his death in 1645, the Superiors of the company of Jesus finally got around to commissioning a record of his life and divine gifts.

That task fell to Fernão de Queirós, who was now enjoying high office in the Indian Church hierarchy.[3] By the time he finally completed and revised the *History of the Life of the Venerable Brother Pedro de Basto* in 1684 Queirós had come to believe that he had been destined for this biographical duty ever since his encounter with the holy man. Queirós had been strongly impressed by Basto's prophecies about the ruin of the Portuguese State of India and in particular by his conviction that the island of Sri Lanka, one of the brightest jewels of the fading empire, would be conquered by the Dutch. Basto claimed that the Dutch would be acting as the instrument of God's punishment: the Portuguese had failed in their providential task of inaugurating a truly Christian world empire and now they would pay the price. Some eleven years after Basto's death the Dutch did indeed manage to wrest the island from Portuguese control. In the course of his research into these prophecies Queirós found it increasingly important to establish just what

had happened to the Portuguese in that bountiful Island. This is how he came to write the *Conquista Temporal e Espiritual de Ceylão* (The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon), an exhaustive history of Sri Lanka from the first visit of the Portuguese in 1505 to their expulsion 153 years later.[4]

This work lay unpublished till the twentieth century, but it is now widely available in Sri Lankan book-shops and often referred to as 'the single most important source for the Portuguese period.' Every serious scholar of this period has paid tribute to its comprehensiveness and historical value. Tikiri Abeyasinghe, for example, said that the *Conquista*, "is the history *par excellence* of the Portuguese in the Island. It has justly been hailed as second only to the *Mahavamsa* as a source for the history of Ceylon. For the loving care and great pains which he has gone through his sources and the wealth of information he has made available to us, Queyroz does not yield place even to the author of the *Mahavamsa.*"[5] However some years later Abeyasinghe wrote an article which was rather more sceptical and nuanced in its appraisal of the merits of the work, as its title indicates: 'History as Polemics and Propaganda: An Examination of Fernão de Queirós' *History of Ceylon*'. This excellent essay is where every student of Queirós should start.[6] However, Abeyasinghe realised that it was only a beginning. He said there that he "would like to offer some comments on the subject in the hope that a debate on the value of Queirós' work will thereby be initiated.[7] "At least as far as published work is concerned that hope has not really been fulfilled.

The present essay is intended to contribute to that debate by drawing attention to a few aspects of the *Conquista* (and Queirós' oeuvre as a whole) which scholars have by and large left unexplored. That is to say, it will suggest some alternative perspectives on the *Conquista* rather than offer any grand new analysis of it. For while the *Conquista* is undoubtedly rich, it is also difficult to digest; it is a large, complex, unwieldy work that tends to resist critical penetration. Its key virtues, that it uses sources now lost to us and describes events otherwise unknown, also make the reliability of the *Conquista* difficult to assess. It would take many years of work to unravel some of the knotty problems of its construction.[8]

There are three areas of research which would benefit from a reinvigorated study of the *Conquista* and Queirós' other writings: (1) The narrative history of early 16th century Sri Lanka; (2) The ethnography of early modern Sri Lanka and India; (3) Queirós and his milieu.

The Narrative History of Early 16th Century Sri Lanka

'Narrative history' is the area for which 'reinvigoration' is least required; indeed it is the subject for which Queirós is famous. Especially for the later periods, the *Conquista* has been used thoroughly and judiciously. Moreover Abeyasinghe's article gives a considered appraisal of his historical merits and shortcomings. Therefore, the following comments will be confined to two suggestions regarding his account of the earlier period, the first fifty years narrated by the *Conquista*.

The first suggestion is merely to read Queirós with a greater awareness of his tendency to manipulate his narrative in accordance with his own missionary preoccupations and long-standing topoi of Catholic apologetics or chronicles. This is necessary when Queirós offers commentary on the action or imputes motives to his characters. Clearly such statements should not be readily taken at face value, yet they have often led a rather privileged existence in subsequent historiography - perhaps because the attribution of motive lends a certain colour to the narrative.

For example, it has often been repeated that the principal reason why Bhuvanekabahu VII of Kotte (1521 - 1551) never converted to Catholicism was that he was afraid of alienating his subjects. While some Sri Lankan leaders (King Jayavira of Kandy, the Prince of the Seven Korales, Vidiye Bandara, the Chiefs of Trincomalee and Batecaloa) were politically cynical in their requests for baptism, Bhuvanekabahu is represented as being politically canny in his refusal of it.[9] There is nothing *a priori* unreasonable about this. Sinhalese royal ideology placed a great emphasis on the King as the protector of Buddhism whose legitimacy was contingent on the fulfilment of his religious role. Moreover the fate of his successor Dharmapala who did convert might suggest that these ideological prescriptions could translate into communal action: the *sangha* deserted him, and great numbers of his subjects defected to Sitawaka.

On the other hand, such religious concerns were by no means the only or even the decisive factors in determining royal policy and subject response. In fact, the only direct evidence that Bhuvanekabahu calculated in this manner comes from Queirós. The most extreme statement occurs during an entirely unhistorical meeting with Francis Xavier.[10] There we are given the text of a speech supposedly made by Bhuvanekabahu in which he admits that, "the religion of Buddum

contains errors as intolerable as they are incompatible with reason". Yet, although he accepts the truth of Christianity, "I am unable to receive Baptism at once, for the least suspicion that they should have of me in this regard would be enough to ruin the whole of my realm." That this speech - and even the sentiments of Bhuvanekabahu that it purports to convey - are entirely fictitious is not going to surprise anyone who is familiar with the methods of Queirós. However it is perhaps surprising that it is such a ludicrous and transparent fiction. The whole purpose of the speech seems to be to deny that there could ever be intellectual grounds for objecting to Christianity - and that the only reason why native princes refuse baptism is rank political calculation. Therefore, Queirós' frequent allusions to this sort of motivation represent a rhetorical ploy designed to further his arguments for a 'spiritual conquest' of Sri Lanka.[11]

This was not a topos of his own invention. We can see its early deployment in a letter of Affonso de Albuquerque to the King of Portugal in 1514, describing his attempt to induce the Raja of Cochin to convert.[12] Albuquerque, in keeping with his typical self-fashioning, presents the narrative as a frank and straightforward narrative of what happened - and a number of historians have not seen much cause to question that.[13] However the letter is arguably an intricately-constructed rhetorical attempt to negate the fact that Albuquerque failed in his mission to bring the Raja to baptism. It does this by insinuating that the failure was not due to any rebuttal of the intellectual force of Albuquerque's arguments; that instead it was due to the Raja's political cowardice and weakness of character; and by intimating that the Raja and the whole territory would fall to the Cross soon enough anyway.

We should treat Queirós' comments with equal caution. As C. R. de Silva has already pointed out, Bhuvanekabahu's own letters give a quite different picture of his state of mind. They are consistently frank about his refusal to convert and the importance he attached to the traditions of his forefathers.[14]

Queirós' representation of Bhuvanekabahu's adversary, Mayadunne of Sitawaka (1521 - 81) may well be subject to a similar stylisation. In Queirós' narrative Mayadunne is presented as the champion of Buddhism, implacably opposed to Christianity and its Portuguese propagators on grounds of principle. Mayadunne is described as "being anxious to extinguish in Ceylon the name of Christ..." and with Sankili, King of Jaffna (1519 - 61) he plans war, "on the plea of defending the Law of Buddum..."[15] However given what we know of Queirós' mind-set - as someone who spent a great deal of time devising weapons with

which to defeat heathen argument and who saw the history of Sri Lanka (indeed history per se) as a narrative of 'spiritual conquest', a battle between God and the Devil - it is somewhat inevitable that he resorted to the traditional Portuguese motif of religious war. His kind of history demanded that there be a spiritual adversary and Mayadunne was the natural candidate. To Queirós' mind national resistance and spiritual resistance meant the same thing. And in setting up the conflict of Christ versus Buddha he momentarily forgot that Sankili - Xaga Raja as he is called - was a Hindu.

So, it may be true that, particularly after Bhuvanekabahu's death, and with the conversion of Dharmapala there was a groundswell of popular anti-Christianity to be tapped. *Bhikkhus* rose up in revolt and smuggled the tooth-relic into Sitawaka: an unmissable propaganda opportunity. The speech which Queirós puts in the mouth of the monk 'Budavance' at this point may be entirely fictional but it could conceivably represent the tone of Sitawakan propaganda.[16] But we should think twice before assuming that Mayadunne was someone primarily motivated by religious principle. When he wanted to form an alliance with the Portuguese in 1547, he was not above coming to some sort of an agreement with Antonio Moniz Barreto "regarding the spread of the Christian religion and the service of the king of Portugal."[17] There does remain the possibility that Queirós took this image of Mayadunne from a Sinhalese source. I have not yet been able to study all the relevant texts to ascertain whether this is so. At least one version of the *Rājāvaliya* never attributes this Buddhist mission to Mayadunne.[18] It is conceivable that Rajasinha I's outright conversion to Hinduism was an expression of an older Sitawakan tradition of Saivite devotion - and the 'Bhairava' or 'Berendi' kovil, traditionally ascribed to Rajasinha, may have been built in his father's reign.[19]

The second suggestion concerns a *less* sceptical (or perhaps more creative) reading of Queirós. For all the acclamations of Queirós' historical value, parts of his narrative of Bhuvanekabahu's reign tend to be ignored by historians. There are some good reasons for this. For this early period Queirós was writing at a distance of some 140 years. His account is sometimes garbled and nonsensical. Most importantly one can write a decent history of the period from the surviving contemporary documents.[20] Often Queirós' narrative seems completely at odds with what we know from these documents.

Nevertheless, Queirós describes some intriguing events which seem to invite speculation. They tend to centre on the maverick behaviour of Vidiya Bandara (who Queirós refers to as 'Tribule'): he leads several freewheeling

campaigns which twice take him into Kandy to exact tribute and kill the King (!), there are various ruptures and reconciliations with Bhuvanekabahu and his Captains, he attacks Sitawaka, is imprisoned and escapes, and several times we are told that Sitawaka, Kandy and Jaffna form a monolithic alliance against this worryingly active Kotte.[21] Apart from this narrative there are various other trivial incidents, but the most interesting is what might be called 'the second Catholic-Buddhist debate.' It occurs in Queirós' narrative of the mid-1540s (the first happened in 1543).

It is not so surprising that Queirós should have access to unusual information. Our other narratives for this period fall into two broad camps: the secular Portuguese chroniclers of the 16th century, men at some distance from Sri Lanka but with an overall awareness of patterns of events within the empire and with access to official archives; and the Jesuit hagiographic tradition concerned with Francis Xavier which ultimately derives from the letters sent by contemporary priests. Whereas in Afonso Dias de Lomba, Antonio Barboza Pinheyro and Bento da Silva, Queirós had access to an altogether different kind of source; these men were long-term residents of the casado community in Sri Lanka and therefore likely to be repository of family histories and a more local perspective.[22] Then there is the lost work of Fr. Francisco Negrão which offered an earlier Franciscan viewpoint and an unusual interest in Sinhalese culture. Moreover, beyond these, Queirós also mentions various anonymous people with great personal experience of the Island whom he had managed to talk to. It is just conceivable that we even get something approaching a (much distorted) Sinhalese tradition.[23]

This does not change the fact that the contemporary documents are infinitely preferable. And they would appear to render Queirós' narrative, as it stands *with its present chronology*, very implausible. All these calamitous political-military upheavals have left no impression on the correspondence of the time. The King of Kandy, for example, far from suffering constant invasions and executions, began the 1540s in frustrating isolation and spent the rest of the decade wooing Portuguese expeditions to his highland seclusion.[24] Even the alleged protagonist of the second debate, Father João de Villa de Conde, made no mention in any of his letters of such a dramatic chapter in the generally dismal story of his Ceylon mission. However, we should remember that Queirós did not tend to just invent *events* per se, (though he did invent much else) rather he got them muddled up, reinterpreted their significance, and massaged them so they did not completely disrupt the coherence of his narrative. In other words there is something behind Queirós' nonsense - something which may have its origins in

truth.

There are two possibilities (1) Such events did "happen" in some form, but they have been assigned to the wrong time and placed in the wrong order. This could be a result of the chronological imprecision of sources derived from oral tradition, or just the constant problems that Queirós faced in trying to create a coherent narrative out of such disparate materials. (2) Such events are taken from stories about the past that reflect the interests of particular communities - they are then exaggerations, distortions, transformations of historical fact. (Of course, in that case, they may also be myths). Now Schurhammer does not say any of this explicitly (he was not much given to elaborations of theoretical intent) but a number of suggestive footnotes in his introduction to the 1928 collection indicate that he had reached similar conclusions. As far as I know, he is the only person to attempt to digest this material in this manner.[25]

Thus Schurhammer seems to have both possibilities in mind when he wonders whether Mayadunne's alliance with Kandy and Jaffna is a distant memory of Bhuvanekabahu's designs on these kingdoms for his sons in 1543, or if the story of the defection of Itacon's faction to Sitawaka recalls the defection of Prince Jugo's supporters; or if the account of Vīdiya Bandära's imprisonment belongs properly to the 1550s, or if Vīdiya's siege of Kandy in January 1546 is a memory of Mayadunne's campaigns in the hill country at this time and so on.[26] One feature of many of Schurhammer's suggestions is their assumption that Vidiya Bandara has somehow taken the credit for the actions of other people. Was there a group that had some interest in glorifying his name? Or is it that Vidiya Bandara really was a more active and aggressive figure in Bhuvanekabahu's time than our Portuguese sources let on? And if, following Schurhammer's method, the story of the 'second debate' has its origins in some vague tradition, would that indicate that the Buddhist hierarchy were making a rather more vigorous and direct counter-offensive at this time than we are otherwise led to believe? Or should we resign ourselves to the fact that Queirós has disfigured his sources beyond repair?[27]

The Ethnography of Early Modern Sri Lanka and India

A more valuable prize lies in wait for those prepared to tackle the hoards of ethnographic material buried away in Queirós' rambling narrative, the great majority of it in Book One.[28] Abeyasinghe's article gives us only one paragraph on this subject, but he makes some good points: "One can confidently assert that no

other seventeenth century work on Sri Lanka, except Robert Knox's *Historical Relation* contains as much anthropological material as Queirós' *History.*" He also points out that so detailed is his information that it could only come from grass-roots level oral sources.[29]

What kind of information do we get? Some of the topics are: the Vedda lifestyle and their functional incorporation into Kandyan society (the first European account of the Veddas?); the castes of Sri Lanka and some of their origin-myths; marriage ceremonies and polyandry; customs of warfare; and what could charitably be described as the 'ethos' of the Sinhalese: their moral prescriptions, their attitudes to law, war and death.[30] In the course of the lengthy geographical survey (chapters 4 to 9) we are sometimes given an impression of regional social variations and loyalties. There is a separate snapshot of Jaffna, with comments on its inheritance, caste, tenure systems.[31] One of the most detailed chapters is reserved for an account of Sinhalese astronomical/astrological knowledge.[32]

Queirós devotes most space to the religion of Sri Lanka - if the *Conquista* is a kind of reconnaissance report on the 'lie of the land' before invasion, then Sinhalese Religion is the most obvious obstacle to spiritual conquest. "Who are the religious of the sect of Buddha?" he asks at the head of Chapter 16 and he proceeds to tell us about the monastic system and the monkish manner of living, about their education and literary facility. He retells a brief life of the Buddha, and even has a stab at outlining Buddhist beliefs.[33] He reproduces a long account from China on the Buddha's life in order to contrast it with the Sinhalese version.[34] We get many descriptions of various temples and their associated myths.[35] All of this comes from Book One. Beyond this, in the far reaches of the narrative books, lie further scattered comments alluding to aspects of Sinhala culture.

Yet this material in the *Conquista* has generally been left in peace, while Robert Knox's account of Kandyan Society in the late 17th century has been comprehensively mined and is constantly referred to. Reliability is again at issue: R. Knox's *Historical Relation* is an eyewitness account by an Englishman who lived in the Kandyan region for nearly two decades. Queirós, on the other hand, never visited Sri Lanka and his account is a compendium of all sorts of sources which were produced at different times about different parts of the island: a much less attractive proposition.

At least that is how it seemed until very recently. Leaving aside what Queirós borrowed from known texts (such as Barros and Do Couto), it was

natural to assume that the remainder must be taken from the other sources which he explicitly names – and which are now lost to us: Bento da Silva and particularly Fr. Negrão's *Chronicle of the Province of San Thome.* Perera asserted that the latter work lay behind the bulk of the material in Book One.[36] This was reasonable enough: we know that Negrão produced a report on the ruins of Anuradhapura and managed to acquire translations of the Sinhalese chronicles.[37] Yet Jorge Flores has just made a startling discovery which should overturn this hypothesis. It appears that a great deal of Queiros' ethnographic material has been taken directly from an account of Ceylon written in the 1620's by Constantino de Sa de Miranda, which has been languishing in the University Libraries of Madrid and Zaragoza.[38] Queirós never mentions Miranda as a source, indeed he only him refers to him once, as the Captain-Major of the Field involved in a battle against Mayadunne prince of Denavaka in circa 1619.[39]

I was only made aware of this at a very late stage and have not seen the text for myself. We will have to wait Jorge Flores' publication of the text - with the title *Os Olhos do Rei. Desenhos e descricões Portugueses da ilha de Ceilão (1624, 1638)* - to see just how extensive Queirós' unacknowledged borrowing has been. One would expect, though, that by and large one can now bypass Queirós and go straight to his source. Nevertheless some interesting questions remain: how much editorial control did Queirós exert over Miranda's text? This is a crucial source, written by a man who had taken high office in the island: why did Queirós refrain from mentioning it even in his rough draft of the first part of the *Conquista* (which now lies in the Biblioteca da Ajuda in Lisbon)?[40]

The main body of Negrão's work was completed before 1612, while Miranda's was not written much later: in other words, the bulk of Queiros' material relates to Sinhalese society in the late 16th/early 17th century, a period which is otherwise rather lacking in ethnographic evidence, and certainly more than half a century before that of Knox. In this way, it is possible that a re-reading of Queirós and Miranda will advance the cause of historicity in the study of Sinhalese culture. It is, no doubt, logical to assume that the civilization of the 16th century was not so different from that which left its impression on the more literate epochs of Parakramabahu VI's Kotte of the 15th century, or Kandyan society in the 17th and 18th century. Nevertheless from other sources one does the get the occasional glimpse of idiosyncrasy.

Take for example, the letters of Morais and Dias in 1552, the first Jesuits to visit the Island and also (not coincidentally) the first Europeans to give an

inquiring account of Sri Lankan customs and religion.[41] Both men complain with some passion of a major obstacle to their mission: that it is the custom for women to be kept entirely secluded from men other than their husband. This makes administering baptism rather tricky. The wife of the Prince of the Seven Korales, for example, committed suicide by taking poison because she was seen by another man. We do not hear any echoes of this from Kandyan times, while for the 15th century we can read verses describing men and women playing together in water-sports or mixing freely at poetry readings.[42] In the face of this peculiar reportage one's first reaction might be to say that the newcomer Jesuits had mistaken Muslim practice for Sinhalese custom. But then we learn that, "In this country there are many elderly persons...and even some of those who are familiar with the King, whether Pagans or Portuguese, who have never seen the Queen and other noble ladies."[43] This norm existed among the Sinhalese elite. Indeed it may well have been peculiar to certain elite circles: it seems odd that no other missionaries have commented on it. Was this a local and transient custom of the mid-sixteenth century?

Despite the title of the *Conquista*, Queirós devotes a surprising amount of attention to describing the social and religious practices of India. This is partly because Queirós, not so unrealistically, saw Sri Lanka as part of the broader cultural unit of South Asia. The 'Chingalas' are a particular case in the general picture of "the Heathen of this Hindustan".[44] It is also because his own personal experience and the bulk of his expertise belonged to India. We learn about the Indian caste system and the way it determines modes of courtesy and attire; about the domestic rituals of eating and cleanliness; of kinship arrangements and the details of marriage ceremonies; about political ideology and the functioning of law.[45] Naturally it is Indian religion which excites Queirós' prose. We are treated to incredulous accounts of Hindu cosmology and the measurements of celestial topography.[46] But the most intriguing details come in the great miscellany of Chapters 20 to 23, as Queirós develops an obscure historico-theological thesis on the Western origins of Indian custom. One can even sense a kind of proto-anthropological appreciation of holism as Queirós explains why he thought it necessary to discuss fundamental Hindu beliefs: "But as nothing can be said about their customs without touching on the diversity of their castes, nor of these without speaking of Brûmã [Brahma], nor of him without touching the principle of their false Trinity..."[47]

However, Queirós' comments on India are of less import than the information he relays on Sri Lanka. The religion and culture of seventeenth

century India attracted the attention of many other writers, who tended to produce works that were more thorough and insightful than the *Conquista.*[48] Having said that, we are sadly not in a position to judge Queirós' direct attempts to capture Hinduism. Both his works on this subject, a Theological and Philosophical Treatise and the *Perfeito Missionario,* were lost in the fire that destroyed the library of St. Paul's College, Goa, in 1664.[49]

In any event, from the *Conquista* we are only going to get images of India or Sri Lanka as they were understood by the Portuguese. In the process of making use of this ethnographic data one inevitably gets dragged into the question of how much it has been 'distorted' or transformed by its mediation through a Portuguese-Indian Catholic sensibility. This can be a frustrating task but it has its own rewards.

Fernão de Queirós and his Milieu

This would represent a new field of research. Abeyasinghe touches upon Queirós' attitudes in so far that they have an effect on his history: on his belief in the divine will guiding the course of history, on his intense Portuguese millenarianism, on his antipathies against Muslims, the Dutch and Portuguese officialdom, his hardened stance against 'idolatry' and his somewhat complicated ideas about race.[50] But these do not need to be viewed as obstacles standing in the way of our clear vision of the past. We could shorten our focus and take as our object the mind of Queirós himself, as one route into the peculiar world that he inhabited. He is, after all, an interesting man or rather he was in an interesting position: probably one of the most learned men of his time in Portuguese India, struggling with ideas and debates on how to deal with non-Christian religions while maintaining a deeply orthodox world-view that held fast to Christian superiority and planted its roots in miracles, prophecies and allegorical readings of the Old Testament. He was also a man peering through the twilight of the Portuguese empire, whose life had been spent watching bits of the *Estado da India* fall away into heretical hands. This was the atmosphere that lent such power and pathos to the proclamations of Pedro de Basto and forced Queirós to cling to his rather desperate belief in the coming Fifth Empire. It is also a milieu that has not received its fair share of academic attention. We know a great deal less about the dynamics of ethnographic and theological thought in the late Portuguese Empire than we know about the intellectual scene in the Iberian Americas at this time.

Abeyasinghe's verdict on his laborious mental struggles was blunt: Queirós had, "little understanding of Oriental learning, eastern religion, or Asian culture..."[51] Of course in one sense this is true enough. There were indeed European contemporaries who were making more profound enquiries into Hinduism. On the other hand, Queirós was highly educated and curious, particularly with regard to Sinhalese Buddhism. He was genuinely interested in such subjects and lamented the lack of information at his disposal. We should remember that the judgements and biases of the *Conquista* do not only represent the shortcomings of Fernão de Queirós, but also the shortcomings of the sources on which he relied.[52] That Queirós could not lay his hands on a document which offered a more adequate explanation of Sinhalese Buddhism is an indictment of the incuriosity of the whole Portuguese community, not just of one man.[53] This is not to say that Queirós was driven by a purely academic need to know: knowledge was sought after in order to be refuted. This principle holds for most of the early European writings on eastern religion and it is to these works by Jesuits and other Christian scholars, slowly evolving a more sophisticated grasp of their opponents creeds (though Queirós was, it is true stuck in a rather vestigial and dead-ended branch of evolution), that we owe the beginnings of Orientalism.

Rather than merely condemn Queirós it would be more profitable to make the same effort to understand his mind-set that we wish he had made to understand the culture of his South Asian neighbours. To the modern scholar Queirós' mind is surely not less strange than those of the people he wrote about. When Abeyasinghe wrote that, "Queirós was not a product of his time, but of a period two centuries before" it was a witticism hardly intended to bear a literal interpretation.[54] Yet it relies on a certain blitheness with regard to geography in its implicit comparison of Portuguese Goa with the European centres of learning. As we shall see, Goa's location produced its own intellectual agendas. It is only if we insist on a teleology of academic advancement that Queirós registers as an insignificant relic.

One or two of Abeyasinghe's other judgements are a little uncharitable. He concedes that Queirós was strictly opposed to notions of European racial superiority. But it seems somewhat unnecessary to conclude that, "his favourable views on Asians flowed from political necessity."[55] Queirós does not strike one as being overly concerned with the delicate diplomatic concerns of the *Estado da India*. He is hardly shy of criticising that which fails to meet his standards of piety, that is to say all Eastern religions and Portuguese officialdom itself. In fact, one could equally imagine that his comments about race stemmed from his immersion

in the history of Sri Lanka - which clearly illustrated how the arrogance and insensitivity of the Portuguese in their dealings with the peoples and kings they encountered was one of their more counter-productive and reprehensible traits. After a reflective lament on the blunderings of the viceroy Affonço de Noronha in 1552, Queirós says that he touches upon this subject, "merely to show the petty things for which greater things are lost, and the unreasonableness of those who think that these [Eastern] Princes are not worthy of all honour and courtesy."[56] After all, on theological principle Queirós believed that all human beings were blessed with the faculties of reason such as to apprehend the divine and all were equal before the eyes of God: "it is an amazing thing that we seek to improve the works of God and fancy that only Northern people are to be esteemed, because they are white."[57] Queirós was perhaps capable of a humane indignation that extended beyond dogmatic pieties. We could equally explain his attitudes with the fact that by the late 17th century some of the more "enlightened" works of Jesuit oriental studies would have become part of the standard education or at least a matter for general discussion.

Yet Abeyasinghe describes Queirós as the product of an utterly reactionary and scholastic education. Only a study of the curricula of seminaries at this time and other letters and texts produced by his colleagues will tell us just how closed-off Queirós' little world was. No doubt they will not reveal a progressive schooling, but one suspects that it was somewhat broader than Abeyasinghe allows. The Jesuits were famous for providing a most demanding and comprehensive education. Between 1635 and 1641. Queirós took a degree in Humaniora and Philosophy at St. Paul's college Goa, a subject which he subsequently taught.[58] Many of the writers of the 'humanist' canon would have been covered by such a course. Which is not to deny that there is a curiously old-fashioned flavour to the *Conquista*. This makes its milieu all the more intriguing.

Abeyasinghe represents Queirós' approach to Eastern religion as being comprehensively and consistently negative.[59] Queirós does indeed show a visceral disgust at all forms of 'idolatry' and it is not difficult to picture him serving in the Inquisition of Goa.[60] He did think that other faiths were deeply mistaken and this mistake was the difference between Good and Evil. However, the dividing line between Christianity and other religions was not as hard or absolute as one might think and it had to be maintained in the face of various similarities and analogies and historical theories that pressed upon it. The harsh rhetoric of Queirós on the demonic ugliness of heathen Gods to which Abeysinghe refers betrays a man concerned to keep that line in view at a time when it threatened to disappear. We

should not underestimate the extent to which more radical viewpoints contributed to the intellectual dynamics of the Jesuit world at the time.[61] Another awkward factor was that at this mature stage in Portuguese Goan history, the Church must have included Indian converts who retained an awkward pride in their Brahmanic heritage. Indeed Queirós devotes two chapters to attacking a treatise by an anonymous author, clearly a Christian Brahmin, who sought to retrieve some of the nobility and even spiritual wisdom of his forefather's traditions. Of these chapters Abeyasinghe refers to them only as being, "classic examples of scholastic disquisitions."[62] They may strike the modern reader as being over-long and tediously pedantic, being point-by-point rebuttals backed up by endless Biblical and classical authorities. But this also indicates that their target represented a threat of some force to Queirós' world.

It goes without saying that Queirós considered Christianity to be the only path to salvation. Therefore, he dismisses this resurrected Brahmanic pride by arguing that, "the only true Nobility is the one that is derived from [the worship of the] True God and that there is only false and imaginary nobility where false Gods are concerned."[63] However, this comes after two chapters which have exhaustively listed the analogies between the Judaeo-Christian tradition and Brahmanic custom. He concludes that "the foregoing comparison and observations clearly prove that the pagans of this Asia, and especially the Bramanes who are their Teachers and the Authors of all the fables they believe, *had received much intelligence concerning the teachings of the written Law which they had perverted...*" [emphasis added][64] In other words this teeming world of Asian religion has its origins in divine revelation. The concept of diffusionism dominated explanations of cultural difference; the assumption was that of an original sameness overlain with more recent (if crucial) transformations. In this way the strangeness of other cultures was ultimately effaced. Behind every Hindu error one can find a Judaeo-Christian truth. To take just one example, the practice of *puja* and other kinds of offerings could be nothing but a distorted imitation of spiritual indulgences granted by the Popes of the 'True Church.'[65]

Another reason for this belief in 'underlying sameness' is that Queirós was convinced that all human beings had no option but to know God; his presence was inscribed on the hearts of men, as Paul said in his *Epistle to the Romans*.[66] All religions of the world contained this dim appreciation of God. In tracing these familial connections between Christianity and Asian religion Queirós is not so far removed from the post-Vatican II theology of modern Sri Lanka. The difference is that Queirós regarded these relations with contempt as foolish and wrong-headed

cousins, whereas contemporary liberation theologians write to promote brotherly reciprocity.

From Queirós' prose, it would seem that these were assumptions that his audience would find uncontroversial. Controversy centred instead on the details: just how far one could press the analogies and in what circumstances. So Queirós says that while 'Hindustan' in general has Hebraic origins, it is not true that the Buddha preached the Ten Commandments.[67] This is not the result of dogmatic exclusivity on Queirós' part, because in the rough draft of the *Conquista* we find him saying exactly the opposite.[68] Between this draft and the final copy Queirós had changed his mind, presumably because he had been swayed by a recent academic case against his former viewpoint. Incidentally this rough draft of the first two books of the *Conquista* has rarely been used by scholars, perhaps because S.G. Perera somewhat over-emphasises its similarity to the final version in the introduction to his translation. He says that it is "almost identical with the first ten chapters of the First Book of the *Conquista*." In fact, the arrangement of the text is substantially different.[69] A more comprehensive analysis of this text may well reveal other developments in Queirós's thinking.

Even Queirós' polemical object to refute Buddhism and Hinduism could work towards promoting this sameness. It is a pleasing irony: in fashioning the Eastern religions into opponents of the True Faith he made them into its mirror Image. To be suitable opponents they had to be recognisable as religions, and that meant they had to look like Christianity. This may help to explain the curious references to the 'Maturanse of Arracão' (as in the *Maha-terunnanse* of Arrakan). This figure is presented as orchestrating a Buddhist counter-offensive against the Franciscan mission: it is he who is supposed to have sent forth the *bhikkhu* to oppose Fr. João in the 'second debate' of the 1540s.[70] It is highly unlikely that any such figure existed. The Sri Lankan Sangha was never subject to an international hierarchy. However, the Theravada countries did tend to maintain close links with each other; in particular, they regularly called upon foreign monks to reinstate higher ordination when the tradition had lapsed at home. Twice in the seventeenth century, the Kandyan kings had sent a mission to Burma for this purpose and this could be the origin of Queirós' estimation of Arrakanese status.[71]

Yet surely the most important factor behind Queirós' representation is his need to make the 'Maturanse' into another Pope. Just as the Pope in Rome sends forth his legions of missionaries to the east to combat idolatry, so the 'Maturanse' of Arracão dictates the movements of the enemy from his South-East Asian base.

(Queirós saw South-East Asia as the most intractable Buddhist heartland.)[72] Similarly, this false Pope dispenses jubilees to stiffen the spiritual resolve of his subjects and puts unorthodox thinkers on trial for heresy, just like his Roman counterpart.[73] Moreover, such similarities were not to be marvelled at, since it was customary for Satan to make Evil a simulacrum of Good. After telling us about the jubilees that the Maturanse gave to those who would help Mayadunne, Queirós says in parentheses, "for even here the Devil aped Christianity."

This should alert us to the fact that it is not only in the editorialising of Book One that one will find evidence for the cast of Queirós' mind. All those passages in subsequent books which the historian's eye passes over as being palpably fictitious or deranged would now become the most interesting to view. The speeches which Queirós gives to his leading characters should attract attention, given that they allow him the most freedom from the constraints of his sources. The peculiarity of the speeches seems to derive from the tension created by three quite different aims: to achieve empathy with the actual situation of the character in question; to drive home arguments relating to his polemical aims; to flourish his literary style and classical erudition.[74] Apart from these deliberate aims, the speeches also unwittingly reveal the preconceptions which shape Queirós' thought.

Although this essay has separated out various perspectives to take on Queirós, in reality they all intertwine and impact on each other. Understanding Queirós and his milieu will change how we consider the problem of the reliability of his historical narrative. A single passage can reveal information on many different levels. As a case-study one could take Queirós' treatment of a very old Sinhala story, about King Kälani Tissa and the Kelaniya temple. Jonathan Walters has given us a detailed study of all the versions of this story as it has been retold over the centuries. In the Mahavamsa we are told that the king discovers evidence of an adulterous affair with his Queen and he throws into the sea an imposter-monk and an actual arhant on suspicion of aiding the adultery. The gods are angered with such impiety and raise the seas to destroy Kelaniya.[75] In the Dambadeniya period the story is elaborated so that it is an innocent Elder who is suspected of the adultery. He is not thrown into the sea but placed in a cauldron of boiling oil - but at that moment he becomes an arhant and so remains unharmed. He then perceives that he is paying for the sin in a previous life of casting a fly into boiling milk, he expounds a century of verses on the Dharma and he disappears into Nirvana.[76] The seventeenth century retellings differ principally through a greater exaggeration of the oceanic destruction caused by the Gods, so that the

Rājāvaliya tell us that, "altogether eleven-twelfths of Lanka were submerged by the great sea".[77] Walters suggests that this could be a Sinhala response to the Portuguese appropriations of the temple: a warning of the punishments accorded to those who defile its sanctity.[78]

How is Queirós' account different? In the first place it would seem that it incorporates details that are not given in any other version. Walters says "I know of no other text which claims that 46 kings ruled Kelaniya, nor which claims that the guilty queen was from Sitawaka," and he goes on to suggest that this would represent a particularly Sitawakan bias.[79] In other words, Queirós has preserved a sixteenth century stage in the evolution of this myth. Otherwise Queirós' version seems closest to that in the *Rājāvaliya* as it reports that the greater part of the Island was destroyed.

The most striking difference is that the Buddhist arhant is turned into a proto-Christian martyr. He says in the boiling oil, "Since Lord, you show your power in my weakness by defending my innocence; even though I may be [innocent] of the crime they attribute to me, not long ago I committed another no less grave: grant that by this fire I may atone for it, the body suffering to save the soul."[80] Thus the traditional Sinhalese story of how kings are punished if they fail to meet Buddhist norms is transformed into the motif of the Christian faithful suffering under temporal tyranny. As Walters says, "In Portuguese eyes Kelaniya had become Portuguese." However Walters does not say whether this Christianisation represents a new version of the myth in circulation among the Catholic community, or whether it is a deliberate re-working by Queirós. Both possibilities are intriguing and are not mutually exclusive.

The former hypothesis would envisage a source that had retained the Portuguese community's feelings about Kelaniya in the seventeenth century. The Portuguese destroyed the temple and two Churches were built among the ruins. Perhaps the re-working of the myth lent a kind of legitimacy to this recreation: by making its Christian destiny prefigured in the person of the unlucky arhant. Indeed this could be one example of a Sri Lankan martyrology tradition which has found its way into Queirós. Another example might be the story of the monk who began to pronounce Christian ideas at a debate in Denavaka and ended up being stoned to death on the order of the Maturanse of Arracão, receiving "the Crown of Martyrdom" in 1543.[81] Such stories would give the Sri Lankan Christian community a sense of providential security.

On the other hand, this version of the story of Kälani Tissa could be a product of Queirós' mind and no one else's.[82] As we have seen, the major irregularity of this account is in the content of the arhant's words; this interposing of an incongruous speech into the narrative is a classic trait of Queirós. For these stories about the Kelaniya and Denavaka martyrs also reflect one of Queirós' personal preoccupations, how sparks of divine grace can crop up in the very heart of idolatry: "And though even among these heathens God often works such wonders in justification of the truth..."[83]

However, we need not charge Queirós with deliberate polemical distortion. We could equally attribute it to the problems of translation. We can assume that Queirós (or his source, Miranda or Negrão) was presented with a version of the story similar to that in the *Rājāvaliya*. There the arhant is made to comment on his predicament thus: "it is due to a sin committed in a former state of being".[84] How would a Portuguese of the sixteenth or seventeenth century translate that? And if Queirós is responsible for this version, how would he perceive its true meaning, being already predisposed, on intellectual principle, to see Judaeo-Christian structures underneath the messy complexities of Eastern religion? It is, in fact, not clear whether Queirós is making his monk refer to Original Sin, or just the sins which every mortal is guilty of in the course of life; no matter: the real sleight-of-hand which Queirós accomplishes is to make karmic retribution into Catholic atonement. Yet in a sense, this equivalence is not entirely bogus. There is perhaps one key difference between the two concepts: atonement takes before the eyes of God, whereas the working of karma is a natural law of the universe to which deities are irrelevant. Over and again this is revealed as the one major obstacle to Queirós' understanding of Buddhism and Hinduism; he cannot conceive of a system of thought in which all pattern and meaning in the universe does not ultimately derive from this watchful intelligence, from God. For Queirós it makes no sense for the arhant to merely perceive his sin, instead he must lament it and make that lament known to God and beg for forgiveness. If this represents a colonial appropriation of the story of Kälani Tissa, it is less through symbolic conquest than symbolic slippage.

There are then at least three kinds of information which are offered in this long paragraph on Kelaniya. It gives us evidence pertaining to Sinhalese culture itself, by preserving nuances of an otherwise unknown sixteenth century version of this story; it may also represent the viewpoint of the Portuguese community in seventeenth century Sri Lanka; and it tells us, inevitably, about the polemical intents and conceptual schemas of Fernão de Queirós.

Queirós the Writer

Queirós was not an historian in the modern sense. From many angles he can appear in this light: he did have a genuine interest in establishing what happened and he took great pains to gather information from as wide variety of sources as he could find. He exercised judgement in deciding between different accounts and so on. For large stretches Queirós can provide fairly reliable narrative information, as the works of C.R. de Silva and Abeyasinghe demonstrate.[85] On the other hand, his piety is not directed in the first instance towards the historical evidence, which can be manipulated, even fabricated at will.[86] Abeyasinghe shows clearly that the *Conquista* is shot through with propagandist objectives. And beyond this there were other imperatives, other kinds of truth which at times superseded the dictates of historical truth: the truth of prophecy and the truth of Portugal's providential destiny (as is well known) but also the truth of the Christian message as opposed to the falsity of competing creeds and indeed the truth of the real relationship between revelation and its parodic and degenerative offspring. Words slip their meanings over the course of centuries and none of our current academic caps fits him perfectly. But if we want to keep 'historian' we should also allow him his other titles: biographer, geographer, ethnographer, Catholic polemicist and comparative theologian.

A Mystery

Queirós also wrote a work which was presumed lost: The *Conquista temporal e espiritual do Oriente*. In a bibliographic essay, Schurhammer says that this can now be identified as an incomplete MS in the British Museum, Egerton 1646 (f. 26 - 246).[87] This was published as an anonymous work in *Documenta Ultramarina Portuguesa* I, 1960, 267 - 632 (no. 749) bearing the title from the manuscript: *Conquista da India per Humas e Outras Armas Reaes e Evangelicas (Em breves memorias de varâ es illustres e feitos maravilhosos em huma e outra conquista)*. From Schurhammer's text it is unclear why he makes this attribution. From a brief perusal of the [MS] I can find no clues as to its authorship. It is quite different in style to the *Conquista*, being somewhat annalistic. Can Schurhammer's reasoning be elucidated?[88]

NOTES

[1] This is the modernised spelling of his surname. It has been spelt variously as 'Queyroz', 'Queiroz' and 'Queirós'.

[2] *Historia da Vida do Veneravel Irmão Pedro de Basto, Coadjutor Temporal da Companhia de Jesus, e da variedade de successos que Deos lhe manifestou, ordenada pelo Padre Fernão de Queyroz da Companhia de Jesus.* Lisbon 1689.

[3] See G. Schurhammer, 'Unpublished manuscripts of Fr. Fernão de Queiroz s.j.' in the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* Vol. 5, 1929, p. 213. We first hear of him working on the life in 1671, when Queirós was Praepositus of the Profess House, Goa, and was nominated patriarch of Ethiopia by the king of Portugal.

[4] *Conquista temporal e espiritual de Ceylão*, ed. P.E. Pieris, Colombo 1916. This is taken from the Rio de Janeiro Manuscript. It is commonly available in English translation by S.G. Perera as *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon* (3 Volumes, Colombo 1930; Reprint, New Delhi 1992) There is some ambiguity over the title of the work as there is another copy of the manuscript in the Biblioteca da Ajuda where the title is given as *Historia de Ceilão*. This is the title which Tikiri Abeyasinghe preferred. Here it will be henceforth abbreviated to the *Conquista* in the text, and Perera's translation will be given as 'Queirós' in the notes.

[5] T. Abeyasinghe, *Portuguese Rule in Ceylon 1594 - 1612*. Colombo 1966, p. 7. However, Abeyasinghe also says that Queirós' "views of history are not ours nor are his interests our interests." page vii.

[6] T. Abeyasinghe, "History as Polemics and Propaganda: An Examination of Fernão de Queirós, *History of Ceylon"* in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Sri Lanka Branch*, n.s Vol. XXV, 1980/1, p. 28 - 69. The other crucial texts for the Queirós scholar are S.G. Perera's introduction to his translation of 1930, given above; S. G. Perera's *The 'Conquista' of Queyroz, the only history of the Portuguese in Ceylon.* Ceylon Historical Association, Colombo, Jan 1925, leaflet

no. 1; G. Schurhammer's article for the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 1929 above; Schurhammer's introduction in German to G. Schurhammer and E.A. Voretzsch, *Ceylon zur zeit des Konigs Bhuvaneka Bahu und Franz Xavers 1539 - 1552*, Vol 1. (Leipzig 1928.).

[7] Abeyasinghe, 1980/1, p. 29.

[8] Schurhammer and Voretszch 1928, p. 49 refers to the Conquista as an "uncritical compilation" in which "it is impossible to tell truth from fiction".

[9] For their offers of baptism see V. Perniola, *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka: the Portuguese period Volume 1 1505 - 1565*, Dehiwala 1989, pages 62 (Prince of the Seven Korales, Chiefs of Trincomalee); 160 (King of Kandy); 300 (Vidiye Bandara); 211 (King of Batecaloa).

[10] Queirós, p. 266 - 267.

[11] See also Queirós p. 261, which is almost a variation on the same theme: Bhuvanekabahu is won over by argument (and spiritual power) but then, "in the end political reasons got the better of him and he continued in the worship of Pagodes."

[12] A. da Silva. *Rego Documentacão para a Historia das Missoes do Padroado Portugues do Oriente*, 12 volumes, Lisbon 1947 - 1958, Volume One, Document 109.

[13] One example is G. Schurhammer's *Francis Xavier, His Life His Times*, translated into English by M.J. Costelloe, Vols I - IV, Rome, 1973 - 1982, Volume II, where Albuquerque's account is quoted verbatim with very little comment. See Tom Earle's introductory essay in T.F. Earle and J. Villiers (ed.) *Albuquerque, Caesar of the East: Selected Letters of Affonso de Albuquerque and His Son*, Warminster 1990, for the rhetorical pose which Albuquerque maintains in his letters: a clever manipulation of his material is belied by a tone of manly simplicity.

[14] *University of Peradeniya, History of Sri Lanka*, Vol II, ed. K.M. de Silva (Peradeniya 1995), p. 74. See also Perniola p. 98, 249.

[15] Queirós, p. 262. See also p. 335.

[16] Queirós, p. 336. However Queirós' manipulation is evident when he makes the monk say that Mayadunne was essentially motivated by the fear "that the religion of Buddum will be altogether displaced by that of Christ."

[17] See the letter of João de Villa de Conde, 27/11/1547, in Perniola p. 236.

[18] That is the *Rājāvaliya* as trans. B. Gunasekera 1900, new edition AES 1995. However, the *Rājāvaliya* described in the *Catalogue of the Hugh Neville Collection of Sinhalese Manuscripts* in the British Library, by K.D. Somadasa, 7 Vols, Pali Text Society/ British Library 1987, Vol I, Or.6606 (107), does appear to make Mayadunne an upholder of Buddhism. To resolve this point an examination of earlier texts, the *Sitawaka Hatana* and the *Alakaesvarayuddhaya*, for their representations of Mayadunne is called for. Would this pro-Sitawakan tradition eschew overt associations with Buddhism because of Rajasinghe's Saivism?

[19] *H.C.P. Bell Report on the Kegalle District* (Colombo 1904) p. 62-5, refers to the local tradition which says that Rajasinghe built it when he converted to Saivism in order to redeem his crime of murdering Mayadunne. However, since the story of Rajasinha's parricide is itself likely to be an 18th century invention, this tradition seems to be baseless. See H.B.M. Ilangasinha, *Buddhism in Medieval Sri Lanka*, Delhi 1992, p. 120 - 122, and p. 213. Moreover, Donald Ferguson in his notes to *The History of Ceylon from the Earliest Times to 1600 AD as related by João de Barros and Diogo do Couto*, (trans. and ed. D. Ferguson, Reprint New Delhi 1993, p. 139, 152) says that this was the chief temple encountered by the Portuguese when they entered Sitawaka under Jorge de Castro in 1550 and which was plundered by Dom Affonso de Noronha in 1552. Couto describes this temple as dedicated to Paramisura (= Paramesvara = Siva) and as having strange architecture. This ties in with Bell's comments (above) on the strongly Dravidian features of the surviving architecture, so that it "must have had a refined beauty all of its own". P.E. Pieris, *Ceylon: The Portuguese Era* (First edition 1913, Second edition Dehiwala 1992, p. 123 and 221) also describes the Berendi Kovil as existing in Mayadunne's time and being repaired by his son. This is not to say that Mayadunne was a Hindu per se; it was quite normal for Sinhala Buddhist kings to patronise Hindu Gods.

[20] Collected in Schurhammer and Voretszch 1928 and translated in Perniola 1989.

[21] See, in particular, Queirós p. 252 - 265.

[22] See Perera's introduction to the 1930 translation, p. 12, 13. For example, Lomba's father (or at least close relative) was chief magistrate at Colombo.

[23] Abeyasinghe 1980/1, p. 40, 41 argues that Queirós had sources very close to grass-roots Sinhalese life. Yet Abeyasinghe seems sure that Queirós used no sources which were Sinhalese in origin. While the *Conquista* displays an overwhelming Portuguese bias, the shadowiness of Queirós' oral sources count against such a categorical denial.

[24]However, in late 1545/1546 Kandy was menaced by a joint Kotte and Sitawaka invasion. See Perniola p. 68. It is conceivable that Vidiya Bandara played a role in this shadowy campaign, but Kandy was never actually taken.

[25]Pieris 1992, is the only other work to incorporate this information. However, Pieris' incorporation is rather uncritical, probably because Schurhammer and Voretzsch's collection of the contemporary letters - which would contradict or disrupt Queirós' narrative - had yet to appear.

[26] Introduction to Schurhammer and Voretszch 1928, p. 42 - 47.

[27] A systematic pursuit of this issue may involve a great deal of labour for comparatively little reward. See Abeyasinghe p. 66 for a disheartened attitude to Queirós' amenability to source-criticism. Incidentally the 'second debate' story appears to have the stereotyped features of an oral tradition or myth - perhaps one engendered by a beleaguered Christian community in need of miraculous justification.

[28] Zoltan Biedermann has embarked on a PhD in Lisbon which should take a fresh look at Queirós in this regard. As I understand it, he is interested in comparing Portuguese and Dutch perspectives on Sinhalese culture.

[29] Abeyasinghe, p. 40, 41.

[30] Veddas p. 16 - 18; Castes p.19, 21, 98; Marriage 90, 91 Warfare 96, 97, 99. Sinhalese 'ethos' p. 22, 23.

[31] Queirós, p. 53-5.

[32] Queiros, p.105-110.

[33] It is not a very well-aimed stab. See Queirós p. 114 - 141.

[34] Queirós, p. 122 - 141. This is not presented as an account of Sinhalese belief, as the introduction to the Second edition of P.E. Pieris' *Ceylon: The Portuguese Era*, p. vi, states.

[35] Queirós, p. 35, 42, 57, 66.

[36] Perera 1930, p.15.

[37] See Queirós' reproduction of his king list, p. 13.

[38] Personal communication, Jorge Flores 16/5/2000, 20/6/2000. The manuscript, entitled *Formas de todas as fortalezas da ilha de Ceilão,* has the call-mark, Ms 13 in the Biblioteca Universitaria, Universidad de Zaragoza. My thanks to C.R. de Silva for alerting me to this discovery and for his comments on Sinhalese narrative poems of this period.

[39] Queirós p. 730. C. R. de Silva, *The Portuguese in Ceylon 1617 - 1638*, Colombo 1972, p. 52 places this in 1620. On pages 69, 147 and 152 we learn that Miranda commanded an expedition into Trincomalee in 1624, that he was re-appointed to the same post in 1635/6 and taken out of office in 1637.

[40] The rough draft masquerades under the title *Descripcão Historica, geographica e topographica da Ilha de Ceilão* (Call-mark 51- VII - 27, number 27 in the volume, folios 266 - 281.) See footnote 69 below.

[41] Perniola, p. 318 - 338. Their letters have not received the scrutiny they deserve.

[42] I owe this comment on inter-sex propriety in Parakramabahu VI's Kotte to a conversation with K.N.O. Dharmadasa.

[43] Perniola, p. 332. It is possible that the Jesuits have formed a mistaken impression from unrepresentative circumstances. On the other hand there is no motive for any deliberate misinformation.

[44] See the title to Chapter 11, Queirós p. 79.

[45] See Queirós, p. 79 - 95.

[46] See Queirós, p. 79, 80, 110 - 114.

[47] Queirós, p. 80.

[48] Writers such as A. Valignano, G.P. Maffeus, R. de Nobili, A. de Azevedo, S.Goncalves, J. Fenicio, Linschoten, A. Roger and F. Pyrard de Laval had reflected on Hinduism in contrasting ways.

[49] See Schurhammer 1929, p. 210 and 213.

[50] Abeyasinghe 1980/1, p. 33 - 39, 50 - 53.

[51] Abeyasinghe 1980/1, p.53. It is also true that he knew very little about Asian languages, but it is hardly surprising that he knew no Sinhala, given that he had never been to the Island. Nevertheless this does make his pompous proclamations about the inelegancies of Asian tongues rather hard to swallow. Queirós, p. 116.

[52] Equally Queirós' erudition about Sri Lanka rested on the backs of other researchers, principally Miranda and Negrão. Incidentally another possible avenue of research would be to work out which of Queirós' attitudes he owes to (or were reinforced by) his sources. Negrão, for example, seemed to be particularly angry about disrespectful officials, see Queirós, p. 288.

[53] However see the discussion of the paragraph beginning, 'Some say he taught the worship of only one God....' (Queirós p. 120), in A. Strathern, 'Representing Eastern religion: Queyroz and Gonzaga on the first Catholic-Buddhist disputation in Sri Lanka', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka 1998*, Vol XLIII (published 2000). This shows that Queirós probably did come across one source (again, is this in Miranda?) which gave a more accurate interpretation of Buddhism, but he refused to accept it because it would have undermined his own beliefs regarding the universal principles of religion. Incidentally, the sense of this passage has been further illuminated by comparison with the first draft of the *Conquista* in the Biblioteca da Ajuda. See forthcoming note in the JRASSL.

[54] Abeyasinghe 1980/1, p. 49.

[55] Abeyasinghe 1980/1, p. 53.

[56] Queirós, p. 299.

[57] Queirós, p.298.

[58] Schurhammer, p. 211.

[59] See Abeyasinghe 1980/1, p. 50 - 53.

[60] See Schurhammer 1929, p. 214. In 1673, Queirós, "was for sixteen years Deputy at the Inquisition of Goa."

[61] Some very general comments about the intellectual histories of these views are given in A. Strathern 2000. Most important was perhaps the tradition of Jesuit accommodationism which had began extending a bridgehead of understanding towards Asian religions with the labours of Alessandro Valignano and Roberto de Nobili.

[62] Chapters 22 and 23. See Abeyasinghe 1980/1, p. 49, footnote 71.

[63] Queirós, p. 163.

[64] Queirós, p. 158.

[65] Queirós, p. 156.

[66] Epistle to the Romans, 2. 12 - 16.

[67] Queirós p. 142.

[68] See the *Descripcão* in the Biblioteca da Ajuda (above), folio 273.

[69] Perera 1930, p. 15. The *Descripcão* seems to contain roughly the same information as the final draft but presented in quite a different order. For example, on folio 271 we find sentences which will come in the final draft in the following pages: 65, 61, 62, 69, 70. Sometimes even the meaning of sentences is altered between drafts. Chunks are missing from the early draft indicating that he had yet to incorporate other sources. The latter part of the *Descripcão* seems to argue for the urgency of the Portuguese conquest of the Island, which would belong to Book Six of the *Conquista*.

[70] Queirós p. 258. See also p. 237 where Sinhalese *bhikkhus* are described

as being the "Administrators of the Maturanse of Arracão." *Terunnanse* is an honorific form of *thero*.

[71] Vimaladharmasuirya I (1591 - 1604) invited monks from Arrakan to reinstate higher ordination. See H.B.M. Ilangasinha, *Buddhism in Medieval Sri Lanka*, Delhi 1992, p. 67. There is some evidence that Burmese monks were active in Sri Lanka in the fifteenth century also, though as the recipients of higher ordination rather than its dispensers. (Ilangasinha, p. 168).

[72] See Queirós, p. 141.

[73] Queirós, p. 256 (heresy) and p. 325 (jubilees) Both these practices have no real equivalents in Buddhism.

[74] See also Abeyasinghe 1980/1 pages 55, 56 for further discussion on the invented speech and a list of examples.

[75] Jonathan S. Walters, *The History of Kelaniya*, Colombo 1996, p. 24.

[76] This is the version as given in the circa thirteenth century Rasavihini. See Walters 1996, p. 46, 47. In the fourteenth century a collection of 98 verses was identified as being the 'century of verses' which the arhant recited and thus given the name, *Tela-kataha-gata* (Oil cauldron verses). Walters p.46, footnote 24 argues convincingly that these 98 verses, dating stylistically to the tenth century, were not composed with the story of Kalani Tissa in mind. Nevertheless by the Kotte period this association was being made. G. P. Malalasekera, *The Pali Literature of Ceylon* (1928, reprinted Kandy 1994), p. 163 comments thus: "The verses embody in them the fundamental tenets of Buddhism and are an earnest exhortation to men to lead the good life." However, this association did not become an intrinsic or permanent feature of the story because the Rājāvaliya merely tells us that he spoke, "to the people declaring that this state of existence is a stain on Buddhahood." What does remain common to all versions of the story - except Queirós' - is the centrality of the ethic of *Rajadharma*, the law which binds kings. My thanks to K.N.O Dharmadasa and J. Walters for their comments on the *Tela-kataha-gatha* and other aspects of this story.

[77] *Rājāvaliya*, ed. B. Gunasekera 1995, p. 27.

[78] Walters 1996, p. 69.

[79] Walters 1996, p. 66, footnote 9. See Queirós, p. 29-31.

[80] My translation differs slightly from that given by Perera (p. 30). The Portuguese, from Peiris 1916, p. 23 is "Poys Senhor, mostrays vosso podder, em minha fraqueza, defendendo minha inocencia; ainda que o esteja na culpa, que me dão; outra cometi hâ puoco tempo, nada menos grave; permeti que neste fogo a satisfaca; padecendo o corpo por salvar a alma."

[81] Queirós, p. 236, 7. Denavaka ("Dinavaka" in Queirós) was a medieval district held by the kings of Sitawaka. See Ilangasinha p. 45.

[82] Naturally, this could be ruled out if the story also appears in this form in the Miranda text. If so, and if Miranda is generally a less manipulative and intrusive narrator than, then this would indicate that he was simply recording a version of the story current among the Portuguese community. It may be relevant that the Kalani story is not given in the *Descripcão* (Biblioteca da Ajuda).

[83] Queirós, p. 31.

[84] *Rājāvaliya*, p. 26.

[85] See T. Abeyasinghe, *Portuguese Rule in Ceylon 1594 - 1612*, Colombo and C.R. de Silva *The Portuguese in Ceylon 1617-1638*, Colombo 1972.

[86] Abeyasinghe 1980-81, gives a balanced appraisal of Queiró's merits as a historian. See in particular pages 52 - 68.

[87] G. Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier* (above). Vol. II, pp. 623, 624.

[88] This is not a rhetorical question. Schurhammer always had a reason for an assertion such as this. If anyone else can discern what that may be I would be grateful if they would let me know. The entry for Queirós is Daya de Silva, *The Portuguese in Asia 1498 - 1800: An Annotated Bibliography*, 1987, also makes this attribution, presumably on Schurhammer's authority.

ALAN STRATHERN

LITERATURE AND THE POLITICS OF ETHNO-NATIONALISM IN SRI LANKA

The objective of this essay is not so much to discuss in detail the political or literary scene in Sri Lanka as to raise more general questions about the multiple ways in which they relate to each other. While the confluence of politics and literature recapitulates, to some extent, familiar postcolonial paradigms, it is possible to argue that in Sri Lankan writing the nexus has resulted in configurations that one could not have anticipated. An inquiry such as this one, loaded with issues of subjectivity and agency, is never entirely innocent; and in this particular case, not totally comprehensive. The following discussion is based on an analysis of writing in English and in Tamil, with nothing more than a very rudimentary sense of what is happening in Sinhala literature.[1] More importantly, there is the matter of subjectivity, of my own stance, or bias, if you will, when dealing with a topic that is often contentious. In the process of trying to understand the role of literature I must necessarily interrogate my own perspectives on larger questions on nation, ethnicity and culture. To insist that I do not have a position would be, unfortunately, a position in itself, one that is likely to be seen as defensive, reactionary or elitist. The topic demands that such questions be asked, at least implicitly, and that is what this paper proposes to do.

A title that combines literature and politics is inherently problematic in that it suggests the notion of writing as being framed by and preoccupied with politics as its subject matter. And generally, to quote a popular cliché, "they don't mix." Literature that is concerned solely with the political scene tends to be tendentious, message-driven and often quite predictable and boring. In postcolonial countries which experienced a protracted process of decolonization, such as Zimbabwe and South Africa, the literature has had to struggle against the impulse to document and to preach. In a moment of exasperation with the proliferation of propagandist writing masquerading as literature, Zulfikar Ghose wrote: "A group of novels by South African writers, for

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[1] The complex history of contemporary Sinhala literature is outside the scope of this study. Among others, Ranjini Obeysekere's work on the theatre entitled *Sri Lankan Theater in a Time of Terror: Political Satire in a Permitted Space* (1999) also includes brief comments on fiction and poetry.

example, makes for a semester's package tour of racial guilt, moral outrage and historical enlightenment, and the eager economy class students who are more anxious about their grades than about their culture, don't even realise that the ride they're being taken on has nothing to do with literature" (58-59).

And that said, my objective is to privilege this particular juxtaposition, at least with regard to Sri Lanka. The intersection of literature and politics in this country is particularly significant, and if a body of literature that looked weak and moribund in the past has acquired a sense of purpose in recent years it is because creative writing found a distinctive niche for itself when it came into contact with politics. In both writing in English and in Tamil literature, politics did much more than reflect, document or subvert political realities. It has offered a way of negotiating a complex and constantly changing political situation. While a "postcolonial" reading would expect literature as adopting a supportive or oppositional stance, the reality is in fact far more ambivalent and indeterminate.

Politics has been a tempestuous affair ever since Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948. The fear that minority groups would not fare well under a democratic process that ignored ethnic and demographic issues led to a demand for what is now referred to as a 50-50 representation as early as in 1948. It failed, but the very fact that such a proposal was placed on the table should have been seen as an ominous sign of ethnic disharmony. The subsequent disenfranchisement of the hill country Tamil plantation workers, the Official Language policy of 1956, the assassination of Prime Minister Bandaranaike, the communal violence of 1958 and the failed coup were some incidents that, in retrospect, were charged with political significance.[2] None of these concerns, however, was really picked up by writers. The reasons for this lack of engagement were probably many, involving notions of social stratification, of audience, of the economy, of regional subcultures, and of class. Among authors who wrote in English, class affiliation was probably an important factor. Predominantly middle class, often educated in private or English-medium schools, Westernised and based in Colombo, these writers, for the most part, belonged to a neocolonial, apolitical world and could see the Other only in essentialist terms.[3]

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[2] Tarzie Vittachi offers a useful study of the riots in *Emergency '58*.

[3] Of some relevance here is Rajiva Wijesinha's comment that when James Goonewardene and Punyakante Wijenaike dealt with village life, "both writers ... gave the impression of dealing from an exalted height with specimens to be studied, rather than examining convincing realities from within" (142). See "Sri Lanka" in *The Commonwealth Novel Since 1960* (1991).

Tamil authors were fighting other battles, and their attempt to deal with immediate social ills took precedence over political concerns. Their class backgrounds were more varied, and much closer to regional and rural realities. One only needs to look at writers as varied as K. Saddanathan, S. Ponnuthurai and Dominic Jeeva, for instance, to recognize the very different concerns that preoccupied them. An anthology such as *Velli Pathasaram* (1995) remains a valuable text to map the multiplicity of the Tamil literary scene and recognize the kinds of social and cultural concerns which writers felt the need to address. While generalizations are likely to be misleading, it is to a large extent true that regional subcultures, different religions and wide spectrum of caste affiliations were very much a part of the literary scene in Tamil. Caste-related issues were, for instance, of immediate relevance to a number of writers who were themselves perceived to be of lower caste, or were simply appalled by the apartheid practised in the name of caste. Others whose political leanings were clearly Marxist used their writing to further the ideals of a progressive and class-less society. But the fact is that few writers felt the need to deal with national politics in any meaningful way.

In fact, it was the insurgency of 1971, undertaken by village-based youth, organized by the JVP, that really made an impact on the literary scene. At the risk of broad generalization one might say that politics in Sri Lanka in the first two decades was characterized by the dominance of the English-educated elite who were also, consciously or otherwise, stoking the fires of ethnic nationalism. The insurgency was the first attempt on a large scale, by marginalized and angry youth, to take up arms against the government. It was an ill-fated attempt that was easily crushed, but it was clear to the writers that the old assumptions were gone forever. Hence just about every major author writing in English felt the need to write at least one work that dealt with the grim aftermath of the insurgency.[4] Much has been written about the literature that grew out of this uprising, and the general consensus appears to be that apart from a few notable exceptions, the literature was marked by a naivete that led to easy binarisms and forms of appropriation. As Rajiva Wijesinha puts it, with reference to Raja Proctors' *Waiting for Surabiel* (1981) and P.K. Chandrasoma's *Out, Out, Brief Candle* (1981), "both indulged in extravagant pastoral detail, together with portraits of bizarre

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[4] Works that merit mention include Punyakante Wijenaike's *The Rebel* (1979), James Goonewardene's *An Asian Gambit* (1985), Raja Proctor's *Waiting for Surabiel* (1981), P.K. Chandrasoma's *Out, Out, Brief Candle* (1981) and E.R. Sarachchandra's *Curfew and a Full Moon* (1978).

heroics on one side or other of the struggle" ("Sri Lanka", 143). It must be mentioned that the insurgency did not, for various reasons, involve the Tamils and for Tamil writers, the uprising did not appear to be a problem that related to them.

It is only after 1983 that the political scene altered in a manner that affected the entire country. A series of events led up to the incidents that occurred in 1983, but what precipitated the crisis was the killing of thirteen soldiers in Jaffna who were ambushed by militant groups. This was followed by widespread ethnic disturbance as Tamil homes were destroyed in several parts of the country. From that point on it seemed as if there was no turning back. And the writers have not been immune to the effects of this protracted conflict. Regardless of ethnicity, religion or class, everyone has felt the impact of political violence and ethnic nationalism.

The events of the past two decades have been well documented, albeit from very different perspectives, but what is relevant for the present purpose is that no real progress has been made towards resolving this conflict. Early this year, a few weeks after the heartening news that the Norwegian government had agreed to mediate between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil separatist forces, yet another bomb went off in Colombo, claiming more than twenty civilian lives. In retrospect, this is one of the many attempts in the last two decades to arrive at a negotiated resolution to the ethnic conflict, and on each occasion the result was the same. From 1983 - the year that ethnic nationalism turned into armed confrontation - the pattern has been one of direct conflict between the armed forces of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers or of sporadic suicide bombs that claim the lives of people who are perceived to be unacceptable to one party or another. Almost always, with suicide bombs, no one claims responsibility, and while it is possible to make educated guesses about possible perpetrators, there is no clear evidence of which group is involved. In addition to these acts of violence is the pattern of assassinating politicians, senior administrative officers, or military personnel who are seen to be traitors from the perspective of one group or another. Of course, both the government forces and the LTTE claim victory in the process of capturing and losing strategic areas in the North and Northeast part of the country, but the reality is that of an elaborate game of snakes and ladders. The trick is not to step on the snake, or at least not often.

It is now increasingly clear that several miscalculations and a number of wrong decisions, have brought the country to an impasse from which it is very difficult to seek a solution that is acceptable to all parties. Incidents that, when they occurred, seemed to have only a tangential relation to politics, have now proved to be important factors in the growth of the most virulent form of ethnic nationalism. With the

prevalent culture of violence, the tendency, for the most part, is to create a politics of blame, whereby mutual accusation becomes the norm. Each side would choose a number of episodes to prove its particular point. Incidents such as the killing of several leading politicians, both Tamil and Sinhalese, the forcible removal of the Muslims from the North, the failure to reach a negotiated settlement when the opportunity presented itself, the various attempts to undermine the integrity of a unitary state etc. would constitute major errors from one perspective. The official language policy, the standardization of grades in order to limit university admission, the denial of voting rights to the Indian plantation sector, the violence perpetrated against the Tamils, and so forth would be used to advance an argument from another perspective.

Two aspects of the political conflict are of particular significance. The first is the magnitude of the conflict itself and the ensuing damage to people, property and the economy. As has been pointed out in several studies, there is the militarisation of the state, the erosion of democracy, the displacement of thousands of families, the death of more than 50000 people, inflation on a grand scale, a huge national debt, a breakdown of communications and a polarisation of political stances.[5] The sheer human cost of the conflict is phenomenal and its impact has been such that it will probably take several decades to repair the damage that has been done. For many years now, the northern part of the country remains inaccessible except by plane or by ship. Put differently, in a country which measures approximately 250 miles between its two furthest points, more than ninety miles are not connected by roads or the railway. That alone, given the role of an effective communication network in a modern nation state, provides a sense of the gravity of the problem.

The second is that many of the concerns that could be traced to the origins of the ethnic conflict have now been resolved. The Official Language policy of 1956, for instance, which was seen as a major turning point in ethnic consciousness, was resolved in 1978 with Tamil being given the status of an official language. The disenfranchisement of the Indian plantation workers in 1948 was changed in recent years to give them citizenship. Such specific issues now appear to be less significant than the ethnic nationalism that is the single issue over which neither party is willing to back off. And all debates and analyses ultimately gravitate towards this concern.

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[5] Wiswa Warnapala, for instance, points out that "since 1981 military expenditure increased over 500 percent in real terms. The original defence allocation for 1986 doubled during the year and military spending rose to over 20 per cent of the Government revenue" (297).

Ironically, studies of the conflict have tended to be, quite often, polarised. While a middle-ground is advanced by some, for others, the ideological stance is either a unitary state with territorial integrity, or two separate states on the basis of ethnicity. Every possible source, from religious texts to inscriptions is used to justify one position or the other. Historical studies have been often involved in the historiographical process where originary myths are invoked to valorize one position or the other.

Regardless of blame, what is important for the present is a recognition of the myth-making process that both sides were involved in. The two terms, Sri Lanka and Eelam, are both part of this originary myth of claiming separate identities for the Sinhalese and the Tamils. Political scientists, anthropologists, linguists, literary critics, political leaders, journalists, and historians have all been part of the penchant for asserting a dichotomous history in which one is privileged over another. Given the large amount of material that has appeared in the last few decades, it is now more clear than ever that historiography has been geared towards establishing the legitimacy of ethnic identities. While there are texts that are more objective about facts and self-conscious about the subjectivity of their enterprise, a large number of scholars and analysts have created "histories" that through a process of selection and exclusion, celebrate one point of view or the other. Quite rightly, R.A.L.H. Gunawardana makes the observation that "in the context of increasingly violent ethnic confrontation of recent times, the tendency to view the past in ethnicist terms has become a prominent feature in academic productions" (9). Forms of censorship, the need for political alliances, prejudice or sheer ignorance have all been complicitous in creating a culture of exclusion. It is against this backdrop of a highly polarised and agenda-driven myth making tendency that one needs to look at the role of literature.

In his recent collection of poems entitled *Handwriting* (1998), Ondaatje includes a very personal poem about a servant, one which deserves to be quoted in full:

> The last Sinhala word I lost
> was *vatura*.
> The word for water.
> Forest water. The water in a kiss. The tears
> I gave to my ayah Rosalin on leaving
> the first home of my life.
>
> More water for her than any other
> that fled my eyes again
> this year, remembering her,

a lost almost-mother in those years
of thirsty love.
No photograph of her, no meeting
since the age of eleven,
not even knowledge of her grave.

Who abandoned who, I wonder now. (50)

It is a particularly striking poem in what is an important collection altogether. The insistent use of the Sinhala term is of significance, partly because that is how, as a child, Ondaatje would have learnt to communicate with the servant, despite the fact the language used at home would have been predominantly English. Servants then tended to be Tamils from the hill country or Sinhalese from villages. They were then much more than nannies or workers, since they lived with the family for years, often until they got married, and even then their connection with the family remained intact. In that context, "who betrayed who" takes on a particular resonance. At a personal level, for the servant the act of exile was one of betrayal. At the level of national politics, the migration of the Burghers was at least partially a result of the government's decision to change the official language to Sinhala in 1956. Exile was thus inevitable for those whose mother tongue was English. This discussion of a particular poem about a servant is not to belabour a small point. Servants, in their multiple roles, function as an important motif in understanding the culture of the time. It is thus no surprise that Wijesinha has written a collection of short stories entitled *Servants* (1995) where he dwells at length on their role and significance in Sri Lanka.

Another Burgher author, Rienzi Crusz, who lives in Waterloo, and who claims to have started writing poetry from the sheer boredom of working in the University of Toronto library, published a long poem last year entitled *Lord of the Mountain: The Sardiel Poems* (1999). The first of its kind in his own corpus, Sardiel is about a nineteenth-century outlaw, who became an insurgent largely as a protest against the Buddhist clergy and the landed gentry in Sri Lanka and gradually drifted into a conflict with the British before he was captured and hanged. According to the author, Sardiel, disillusioned with the indifference of the Buddhish clergy, became a Catholic in the final days of his life. That Crusz should choose to deal with such a theme is in itself curious in many ways. Having left Sri Lanka more than three decades ago, he has been away from the political scene, and he chooses to deal with an historical subject in ways that deemphasize the politics of colonialism and stress the outlaw's response to a highly stratified and oppressive system.

A third example of a Burgher is Jean Arasanayagam, who married a Tamil and chose to live in Sri Lanka. She writes eloquently about all her efforts to be a part of her husband's family, only to be rejected at every turn as an outsider. At the same time, during the ethnic riots of '83 she became a refugee, since she was identified as a Tamil by virtue of her marriage. Various identities that ought to have existed peacefully together become the occasion for being pushed to the margins. Multiple traditions converge in her work as she explores the complexities of a hybrid identity in works such as *The Outsider* (1995) and *All is Burning* (1995).

I make this point to reinforce that during the last two decades, starting in the early seventies, politics has come to dominate Sri Lankan writing. One only has to compare Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* (1982) with *Anil's Ghost* (2000) or Crusz's *Elephant and Ice* with *Lord of the Mountain* to get a sense of the distance these writers have travelled. But it is also much more than a need to confront politics. Ondaatje's *Handwriting* is in fact an elaborate myth in which time is collapsed and the past merges with the present. Connections between Tiger groups choosing death over capture get juxtaposed with monks desperately trying to escape invaders. Ondaatje appears to have felt the need to include the politics of Sri Lanka even while resisting the label of "applied art" with a firm hand.

Any taxonomy of writing or authors will have to take into account the differences among them, and there are many, including the obvious one that they write from Sri Lanka, Australia, England and Canada. Religion, ethnicity, political conviction are all factors that would explain why A. Sivanandan writes the way he does in *When Memory Dies* (1997) or why Shyam Selvadurai in *Funny Boy* (1994) and Rajiva Wijesinha in *Days of Despair* (1989) structure their narratives in the way they do. Sivanandan's essay "Sri Lanka: A Case Study" in *Communities of Resistance* (1990) would shed light on the Marxist orientation which informs his work. Wijesinha's study of the erosion of democracy in *Sri Lanka in Crisis 1977-88* (1991) reveals why the author embraces magical realism so readily to portray events that are too bizarre for any rational understanding.

Despite the heterogeneity and complexity of the authors, and the conviction with which they write, their vision is often syncretic. This is true of even Selvadurai, whose novel *Funny Boy* is at least partially autobiographical. The violence of the novel notwithstanding, the vision is one of magnanimity and mutuality rather than separation. Wijesinha's apocalyptic ending in the novel *Days of Despair* is an attempt to create a *tabula rasa* for the future. Whether it is the residual presence of class solidarity or the values that underpin the language itself, writing in English endorses a unitary state, not

because it favours one group over the other, but because its moral touchstone is a Western liberal one.

Depending on one's ideological stance, one could denigrate this body of writing for its refusal to take sides, and in the process, preserve a status quo that is reactionary. At the same time, one could valorize these works for their artifice, their self-consciousness and their resistance to ethnic nationalism. And writing in English is not necessarily safe from official scrutiny. A writer such as Richard de Zoyza paid the ultimate price for his convictions.[6] Writing in English is accessible to a Western audience, and is therefore seen to be potentially subversive. This literature is about politics but not about taking political sides. It serves as a reminder that claims made in the name of history are often textual claims.

The artifice that writing in English often resorts to finds perfect expression in Ondaatje's recent novel *Anil's Ghost* (2000). The novel is about state terrorism, about mass graves and about the disappearance of large numbers of people who were seen as subversives by the State or by militant groups. The author's note at the beginning, despite the disclaimer, is candid about the period in which the hit squads operated: "From the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, Sri Lanka was in a crisis that involved three essential groups: the government, the antigovernment insurgents in the south and the separatist guerillas in the north.... Eventually, in response, legal and illegal government squads were known to have been sent out to hunt down the separatists and insurgents." Having thus stepped into what is potentially a minefield, the novel then withdraws from any real concern with the political scene except in the most non-confrontational manner. The novel self-consciously veers away from the polemical. Instead, the preoccupation is with a few individuals, their lives and the private demons with which they struggle. And yet the novel is a formidable achievement. It does not deny the validity of collective suffering and it does not foreground a postmodern contingency in dealing with human tragedy. But it insists on its own autonomy as artifice rather than life. It is possible to fault the novel for its romanticism, its wilful misrepresentation of mundane realities, its turning away from the enormity of suffering, but the narrator of the text insists that artifice has as much a claim on the author's conscience as reality.

Writing in English, in terms of its vision, is remarkably different from writing in Tamil. And this is not a question of audience, although audience does play a part, particularly for diasporic writers who cater to a very different reading public. Selvadurai's novel includes a character called Jegan, who moves from Jaffna to

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[6] Richard de Zoysa, writer, broadcaster and activist, was murdered in 1990.

Colombo in order to find a job and start a new life. During the course of the narrative it becomes evident that Jegan has political leanings and his host family faces the consequences of having accommodated him. Within the moral framework of the novel, Jegan is a minor character who enters the narrative and disappears. In a work written in Tamil, Jegan might have become the central character, not because literature in the vernacular is pro-separation, but because the trauma of a child who is lost to the family is likely to be crucial to the consciousness of those writing in Tamil. Selvadurai's work is characterised by a forthright critique of the suffering experienced by the Tamils during the 1983 communal violence, but his overall stance is one of a liberal perspective that transcends ethnicity.

To establish such a distinction is not to privilege one form of writing over the other. Comparative assessments are always a tricky business, since they suggest much more than literary response. Both sides have obvious political implications in that any attempt to valorize the vernacular could be seen as part of a larger project of "nativism" which might well lead to forms of ethnic nationalism. By the same token, espousing the cause of English writing might well be a gesture of solidarity with a certain class consciousness that is elitist and reactionary in its assumptions. My position is simply that writing in the vernacular is different.

Unlike writing in English, Tamil writers, in the sixties and seventies, heavily influenced by Marxist policies, were beginning to question some of the fundamental assumptions of Tamil society. K.Sivathamby makes a valid point that while Dalit writing is a recent affair in India, in Sri Lanka, it was in full force in the sixties itself. According to him, "Tamil Nadu had to wait until the 1990s for Dalits to write about themselves. In fact, K. Daniel, the eminent novelist who wrote *Panjamar* is considered the forerunner of Dalit writing" (78). And a highly conventional language had been reshaped to give expression to new realities.

But with all its forward movement, there was still a conservative element to writing in Tamil. While Tamils lived in various parts of the country, regional affiliations mattered a great deal. Each group dealt with its own and while journals such as *Mallikai* and newspapers provided a forum for cross-regional communication, in general the literature tended to form its own pockets. N.S.M. Ramaiah, for instance, wrote about the plantation workers, M.A. Nuhman drew attention to the cultural realities of Batticaloa and C. Sivagnanasunderam worked with the middle class of Jaffna. After 1983 everything changed in a way that no one expected.

For one thing the political scene itself made it inevitable for old divisions to

break down. As people were displaced from one region to another, and as the militants themselves chose to locate themselves in various places, geographical divisions began to disappear. Concurrently, in universities, there were huge changes as new attempts were made to shape and change society. Issues of caste, class, and gender in particular took centre stage. The inclusion of women in the liberation army itself alters the picture considerably. In short, politics was part of a larger groundswell that threw the community into a state of change. Suddenly the imagination was transformed and language struggled to reveal the many aspects of change. Even a cursory look at the poems included in *Maranathul Valvom* (1985) would reveal the dramatic change in consciousness, the awareness that the change involved a whole world view.

Not much has been done by way of extensive criticism or anthologisation of Tamil literature. Part of the problem is in the nature of publications itself. Often privately funded, publications take place in many countries and there is no easy access to the various books that come out periodically. There has been some attempt to provide a common forum through newspapers such as *Sarinigar* and *Kalachchuvadu*, or various annual issues in Britain and France, or occasional collections such as *Maranathul Valvom* that bring together the voices from various countries.

Several developments seem to have been taking place concurrently. At the obvious level, there is the tendentious writing inspired by the Liberation Movement - often, but not necessarily by those actively involved in armed conflict. A few collections by activists have also been released posthumously. At another level is the whole corpus of "official" poetry that is geared towards propaganda, but whose virtue, at its best, is that it draws its resources from an oral tradition of song. In that sense poetry has begun to work with the notion of spontaneity, although the ideology that underlies literary production sometimes diminishes the artistic merit.

The most significant contribution to poetry and fiction comes from a whole new group of writers who find themselves concerned not with the conflict *per se*, but with the manner in which events alter their world view. As a consequence of the political shakeup they perceive a huge ontological void. People uprooted from their villages or their cities where they have lived for centuries, the whole fragmentation caused by the diaspora which has forced probably half a million Tamils to seek a new home in Europe, North America and in Australia, are all part of the consciousness of these authors. Natchathiran Sevvinthiyan's *Eppovavathu Oru Naal* is an example of the kind of poetry that engages with the forms of marginalisation caused by the experience of exile. The poems are more personal than political, and the quest for wholeness often takes priority over the political scene.

For writers in Tamil, their audience is a very limited one. The very process by which these books are launched ensures that the primary readership is the community. Their concerns are defined by the circumstances in which they find themselves. And for the writers who find themselves in the West, their literary influences too are quite often eclectic. In that sense Tamil writing has leap-frogged into enriching areas of intertextuality. But memory insists on reliving the past, of trying to understand the vicissitudes of political action; the dominant concern, then, is with personal and collective identity rather than the modalities of politically charged ethnicity.

There is a curious double-edged quality to writing in the vernacular that is worthy of attention. For the most part, writers, even those who are not overtly political, are not antagonistic to the political struggle. They may not be convinced of the role of the LTTE, but they do not advance a critique of it. And they do not seem to be antagonistic to the Sinhalese either. There is very little ethnic animosity in the literature that is being written. From a sociological point of view that makes perfect sense, since interaction between the two ethnic groups in Colombo and in the West continues to be cordial both out of necessity and out of a sense of shared humanity. The dominant preoccupation is the complete destabilization of a whole world view. Notions that were seen as central to the identity of Tamil society are now also seen as oppressive and hegemonic. And the sense of fragmentation exists at a strange angle to the oneness that seeks political separation. It is interesting that one of the most poignant poems in V.I.S. Jeyapalan's *Suriyanodu Pesuthal* is entitled "Springtime 71," recalling the insurgency. The poem itself is a tribute to the fallen and a nostalgic evocation of a more spacious time.

In short, the Tamil writing that takes place in Sri Lanka and in the West projects the reality of dispersal and the collapse of a whole structure of belief. In that sense, it is even possible to argue that their works constitute a kind of counter discourse in that they do not endorse the cohesiveness of ethnic nationalism. Separatism on the basis of ethnicity presupposes a holistic world view, a return to tradition, an assertion of solidarity. Writing in Tamil is not about creating or sustaining myths so much as destabilizing them. Where politics is about stasis, literature is about fluidity and where the political struggle demands conviction, literature offers ambivalence.

By way of conclusion, it is necessary to recognize that literature written in English and in Tamil occupy separate spaces, although they are linked by a preoccupation with contemporary realities. Ideological stances differentiate one from the other. But together they deconstruct the simplistic binaries of political utterance. A

point of comparison may well be the recent studies of the Partition of India, where scholars have often turned to literature, both written and oral, to understand the complex dynamics of a major event.[7] What emerges from these studies is a far more intricate understanding of a political and religious confrontation that claimed a million lives. In its own way, literature in Sri Lanka does precisely that: probe the claims of Sri Lanka and Eelam through its literary structures in order to reveal a multiple pattern that insists on a much-needed ambivalence rather than a polarised and often futile politics of blame.

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[7] Several scholars, including those involved with *Subaltern Studies* have made major contributions to the critical work on the Partition. Of particular interest is Ayesha Jalal's article "Secularists, Subalterns and the Stigma of 'Communalism': Partition Historiography Revisited." *Modern Asian Studies* 30 (1996): 681-89.

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CHELVA KANAGANAYAKAM

PRISONERS OF OUR OWN ESCAPE: REFLECTIONS ON BATTICALOA DISTRICT INTELLECTUALS AND PIERRE BOURDIEU'S SCHOLARLY POINT OF VIEW

O bliss of the collector, bliss of the man of leisure! Benjamin 1969: 67

If the learned man sits quietly by, who then will ask? Tamil proverb

Wave us away, and keep thy solitude.
Arnold, "The Scholar-Gipsy"

I never met Mr. Jampulingam,[1] though I often tried. I wanted to meet him because of the miracle, and because everyone agreed it was so unseemly that a miracle should have happened to him. But the former roadroller operator for the Batticaloa department of highways was never at home when I called, and he answered none of my messages. After several months of dusty rides down little-known village lanes, journeys that always ended with some bemused, distant kindred of his peeking though a compound gate and telling me to stop wasting my time, I gave up on trying to find the man. Later, I heard a rumor that he had hied off to Jaffna.

But I was hardly alone in wanting to find the elusive Mr. Jampulingam. Other people in Mandur, the Sri Lankan Tamil village where I was studying, also desperately wanted to locate him, especially some of the local "poets" (*pulavar*). Like me, they wanted to know, in detail, just what did happen at, roughly, 10:30 in the morning on the sixth day of the lunar month of *Vaykāci* when a black cobra - and not just any cobra, but a holy,

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[1] As is common in ethnography, all names have been changed. I should also take this opportunity to mention that the title of this paper was suggested to me by Mr. D.P.Sivaram.

nākatampirāṉ - fell from a *Naval* tree on to the head of the recumbent, hitherto slumberous, Mr. Jampulingam.[2] They knew, of course, that the snake had told him, in a clear, cold voice, to construct a temple under that very tree. But they did not know why. Why, that is, the god-snake should fall on a man like Mr. Jampulingam - reportedly a grifter, a drunk, a despiser of god, and a brawling good-for-nothing.[3] In the end, alas, neither I nor they ever found Mr. Jampulingam; but I did discover, in looking for him, something about how one sort of Batticaloa District intellectual goes about answering the questions he inspired. In short, I met one such intellectual in action. No. Let me qualify that. I think I did.

I met this intellectual, if that is what he was, in June, 1982, anthropologist's time. It was early in my first year of fieldwork, well before the war, and thus before Mandur's quiet landscape of paddy fields and roadside temples had been reshaped by the enveloping shrouds of war.[4] His

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2 Also called a *nākappāmpu*, i.e., a cobra. There is another version of this event, written by a different *pulavar,* in which the snake appears before a more vigorous Jampulingam who has been attempting to clear brush from around the *nāval* tree with a fire. This later account, which leaves out most of the difficulties of Mr. Jampulingam's biography which I will be discussing here, was eventually the one adopted by the temple board, most likely precisely because it sidestepped those issues. However, since this is a paper about the intellectual process of composing problematic origin stories, I have elected to focus on this earlier, closer-to-the-bone (of contention) effort.

3 I cannot emphasize enough that the less savoury details of Mr. Jampulingam's biography were all rumour. As I have said in great detail elsewhere (Whitaker 1999: 85-93), discussions of temple history, especially those which rest on assessments of a particular person's prestige and virtue -- what Batticaloa Tamil people call a person's *kauravam* -- are politically charged, rhetorically complex, and, in the end, dependent on facts that are very much products of the struggles for which they are the weapons. Mr. Jampulingam in fact may have been a very different man from the "Mr. Jampulingam" this poet was struggling with. For more information on the particular temple-political context of the *nākatampirāṉ* temple's formation see ibid: 59.

4 I conducted fieldwork in Mandur from very late 1981 till August of 1983, and then again for several months in 1984. My more recent fieldwork in Sri Lanka has concerned other topics, although I did return to the village in

name was Mr. Kandan, and I found him at the first tea shop to have sprung up by the newly constructed *Nākatampirāṉ* temple, the very temple Mr. Jampulingam had built partially on, and all about, the *nāval* tree[5] where he had met his miracle. My assistant, Mr. P., and I initially had gone to this temple hoping to speak to the temple priest about how he was going to handle the impending temple festival, which was starting in a little more than a week. But the priest had been away that day, and the temple grounds deserted, except for one disgruntled washerman caste man. A vitriolic representative of troubles to come, he had been sitting under the shade of the great tree complaining to anyone who would listen that the temple was being built right atop what had once been his dry-land paddy field, and demanding to know what the temple staff was going to do about it. As they were not there, and it was too hot to argue, he eventually went off toward home, allowing us to push on to interview the owner of the tea shop, thinking to get something out of our otherwise (seemingly) meaningless hike of two miles in the mid-afternoon sun.

Now the shop, wavering a bit in the hot wind, consisted merely of a rough, cadjan hut divided by a cloth partition into two rooms. And in the front room, behind a table sustaining pyramids of Lanka colas, water biscuits, and tins of Japanese mackerel, sat the wife of the owner, and Mr. Kandan's parallel cousin. The owner was also the brother-in-law of one of the new temple's new officials, which accounted, I imagined, for the speedy construction of the shop.

As soon as I bought a Lanka cola, however, the owner's wife pensively shrugged off my more mundane questions, and, anticipating my real scholarly need -- as people so often, to my annoyance, did in Mandur -- suggested I ought really to be interviewing her parallel cousin, Mr Kandan, who was, that very moment, in the next room, as she put it, "writing the myth of the *Nākatampirāṉ* temple".

Writing the myth?

Hobsbawm and Ranger's "The Invention of Tradition"(1992)

1993, and to the Batticaloa District in 1997.

5 Also called a "Jaumoon tree".

notwithstanding, this was not what graduate school (in the late 1970s) had led me to expect when it came to the origin of myths. However, my curiosity piqued, I pulled out my fieldnotebook (a rupees 5.75 "Monitor's Exercise Book", bought but a few days before in Kalmunai, a market town several miles north of Mandur) and plunged on into the second room. And there, seated at a table, was a short, balding, fat man (looking rather like I do now), whose thick plastic glasses were half gone down his nose, bent industriously over a rupees 5.75 "Monitor's Exercise Book", scribbling away. He looked up, smiled, pulled his imperilled glasses off, pinched his nose to get the blood flowing, and mildly asked Mr. P. and myself if we would like a seat. I felt a certain disorientation. He had "colleague" written all over him. I sat down, nonetheless, and so did Mr. P., and we all began to discuss what he was writing, and why.

But here is the mystery at the heart of this paper, or at least of the several mysteries inhabiting this paper, this is the central one. For although I have fieldnotes enough about our conversation, including a pretty fair idea of what he was writing, my understanding at the time of what his words meant depended entirely upon what I took his task in this circumstance to be. After some initial surprise, I "took" him, at the time, and subsequently, as some kind of "intellectual", whose task it was to make sense of what was going on in Mandur, particularly with regards to this business about Mr. Jampulingam. Moreover, I still think I was pretty much right to see him this way. But in 1990 the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, a major theorist, suggested in an address at the *Freie Universitat*, Berlin, that seeing either the remarks or the actions of people outside of western-style "academia", and particularly tenured academia, in this way, is to radically extend to the meaning of their remarks a coherence, thoroughness, and explanatory intent alien to their real nature (380-391).[6] I will come back to this notion (which is both good and

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[6] Bourdieu had previously laid out his full analysis of *Homo Academicus* in his 1984 book of the same name. His theory of practice, which might almost be described as a neo-Wittgensteinian critique of structural anthropology, is found in detail in his 1977 *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. See especially page 29. It is important to note, here, that Bourdieu's interest in the difference between the "intellectualist" reasoning of academics and the "practical" moves of people immersed in habitus stems from two interrelated projects that have characterized his career as a thinker. The wider of these is his attempt to use fairly conventional sociological tools in a new, "reflexive" way to force social science practitioners (including Bourdieu

"reflexive" way to force social science practitioners (including Bourdieu himself) to step beyond the Cartesian dichotomies that bedevil their disciplines. Dichotomies, that is, like those most scholars still maintain between subjective and objective knowledge, symbolic and material analysis, theory and research, or even between history's structures and individual agency (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:3). Bourdieu's insight here, made as he is aware by Wittgenstein before him, is that these 'obvious' analytic distinctions are actually products of a particularly sticky scholarly linguistic practice (or "language game"), one that all Western-style scholars have been taught to play. This is the Cartesian "trick" of distinguishing between a perception-observing self and the objective, "extension" it is perceiving itself perceive -- i.e., Rorty's "Mirror of Nature"(1979). But this trick, and the epistemological practices which derive from it, is disturbingly self-replicating, for it inevitably transforms the world it was created to help describe into yet more instances of itself. And this is what Bourdieu claims is at base wrong with the social sciences -- for they, in turn, transform the world of practice most inhabit into the intellectualized "objectifications" of a Cartesian social science. Hence Bourdieu, inspired by Wittgenstein's later philosophy, has tried to show sociologists the way out of their version of this intellectual 'fly bottle' (to use Wittgenstein's image), by forcing their forms of analysis back upon themselves "reflexively", not to dismantle them (a la Derrida), but to reveal even there the "orchestrated dispositions"; that is, the 'habituses', 'social spaces', and 'fields of force' that really shape the social world. And it is important to note here that Bourdieu wishes to do this not to destroy or question the social sciences by undermining their epistemological ground but to demonstrate, rather, a method for displaying how that ground is, and can be better, constructed through careful, empirical, sometimes quantitative, fieldwork. Hence Bourdieu's second project, his analysis of *Homo Academicus*, must be seen as but a part of this larger ambition. In that work Bourdieu tries to map a distinction in the French academy (circa 1968) between conservative "Canonical Professors", who held positions of power within the various institutions of Academia, and "the consecrated heretics", who were the active researchers and writers more publicly recognized as stars of the national intellectual scene. This pattern, he argues, was itself revelatory of a habitus that shaped (and continues to shape) the Academy but which is invisible to the intellectualist scholars who embody it precisely because it is the product of the academic practice in which they are engaged. For additional information about how anthropologists have reacted to Bourdieu's attempt to put social scientists (and all academics) in their place as "dominated among the dominant", and create by contrast a "scientific habitus"(270-271) see Calhoun, Lipuma and

bad) in more detail later, but raise Bourdieu's spectre here to warn you that what I am about to present is, as it were, said under a big question mark.

For what I thought we talked about was how on earth one was to make sense of Mr. Jampulingam's role in the origin of the *Nākatampirāṉ* temple, an issue Mr. Kandan had to solve if he were to write the myth of the temple. But let me backpedal a bit, and explain what I thought, and continue to think, was Mr Kandan's occupation.

When the store-owner's wife informed me that Mr. Kandan was writing the "myth" of the Nakatampiran temple, the word she used was "*kalvuttu*", literally, "stonecutting". Although it is said that the word once referred only to the literally stone-carved, and no longer existent, textual accounts once found secreted away in the most ancient of temples, the word is now generalized by use to mean any written account of the origin of any group or institution, be it a temple or a caste, that was founded by the actions of a deity -- deities being the ultimate creators of social structure in traditional Batticaloa District political thought. Now in 1982 these accounts of origin, or "charter" myths if you will, were necessary to have around because they were important, if not sufficient, evidence of legitimacy that could be used in arguments about social position between different caste groups both within temples and outside them in the general social world of the District. Such arguments, called *kauravam caṇṭai*, or "status battles", occurred frequently there.[7] And, in this regard, the village of Mandur was no different. With six castes -- of which two, the *cirpatar* and the *veḷḷāḷar*, have been deadlocked in an intense status battle since 1905 -- people there have had to have frequent recourse to the invocation, interpretation, and even, as in Mr.

Postone 1993. To observe how social philosophers have reacted see Shusterman 1999. See especially Charles Taylor's article, 'To Follow a Rule..' which, I think, contains the clearest discussion of the relationship between Bourdieu's notions of embodied knowledge or habitus and Wittgenstein's later philosophy.

7 These fights are also called *kauravappiraccaṉai* or "status problems". *Kauravam* is an extremely complicated political concept that reaches into multiple dimensions of Batticaloa District life. For a fuller discussion see Whitaker 1999: 81-136. For a description of how the political processes found in 1982 have been affected by the war see Whitaker 1997: 201-214.

Kandan's case, the writing, of *kalvuttu* to stave off attacks against their privileges or positions or to attack the privileges and positions of others. Thus, writing of, and about, *kalvuttu*, and even writing *kalvuttu per se* has, since the advent of the printing press and, now, the photocopy machine, edged out the once large role orality played in such arguments. In the 1980s, manuscripts interpreting this or that caste history, this or that temple origin story, grew like rice in a paddy field. Sometimes it seemed everybody was writing them. And those intellectuals, called either pundits or "poets" (*pulavar*), who specialized in the writing of such tracts were therefore as common as chaff. Had I been longer in the field when I first met Mr. Kandan, I would not have been as surprised.

Or perhaps I would have been. For it was his method even more than his problem or authoriality that I think continued to evoke in me the impression of a doppelgänger. But to appreciate why that was so, we must return to Mr. Jampulingam, and come to an understanding of just what was problematic about his miraculous run-in with that cobra.

Although Mr. Kandan had known, vaguely, of Mr. Jampulingam's existence before the miracle -- for, it is important to note, both Mr. Kandan and Mr. Jampulingam were of the *veḷḷāḷar* caste -- he told me that rather than rely on his own impressions, he had tried to track the man down, and, failing that, had relied on interviews with family members and neighbours to get some sense of what had led Mr. Jampulingam to that tree. So far, so, intriguingly, ethnographic. In any case, what he had found was that Mr. Jampulingam, in one way or another, had never been up to any good. Said, even by his family, to be an inveterate, and inventive, liar, and nearly a thief, he was also known as a brawler, a seducer, and a general rogue among men. People also agreed that he had, before the cobra, as he continued to have afterwards, an extensive thirst for arrack, the stronger the better. He also had, people agreed, a rather childishly nasty sense of humour. He had once decided, for example, to drop the "Jampu"[8] from his name and just go by "lingam", saying, according to Mr. Kandan, that while he did not want to be known by any god's name, he did not mind being named after a penis. Pretty much, then, what I believe my Mandur village friends used to call a "loose case".

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8 "Jampu" or *campu* implies Shiva.

His high-jinx finally landed him in trouble, however. While on an extended trip to Jaffna he got into a fight in a bar -- or, rather, a tea shop that served "special" teas -- and broke one of his fists. With one wing out of action, and the police apparently unhappy about his presence, he made his way back to Batticaloa to skulk unhappily about and bother his family. In desperation, some distant relation got him a position with the Batticaloa Highways Department, at first driving a roller, and when he proved too unreliable for that, finally, guarding it whenever it might be parked for the night or for a day or two awaiting some job. He had ended up in Mandur because the Department of Highways, which had initially decided to widen the road to the irrigation colony hamlets north of the village, had gotten second thoughts after the battered yellow roadroller was already there to start the job. And so, at shortly after 10 a.m. on a hot June morning, the surly Mr. Jampulingam, a hard night's boozing banging round his brain, settled down between the idle roadroller and the fateful *nāval* tree for a little nap. Then the cobra dropped.

I do not know why, but according to my notes neither I, nor anyone I talked to, doubted that a cobra had, indeed, dropped, despite the source of this intelligence being the untrustworthy Mr. Jampulingam. Certainly this was not a question that puzzled Kandan. He did not address it, either by word or gesture. Perhaps the spectacle of a man running as fast as he could, with his sarong up about his waist, the mile and a half from the Neval tree to the *veḷḷāḷar* part of Mandur in the mid morning sun, a sure killer of speed under normal circumstances, was enough to inspire credence. Even the *Cirpater* pundits, the competing caste's intellectuals, who were ready enough to doubt the divinity of this particular snake, did not doubt that some kind of snake had fallen on the problematic Mr. Jampulingam. In any case, the basic facts of the story were, by the time I arrived, pretty much agreed by all, even up to what the snake said (or was reputed to have said) to the unlucky rogue: "Jampulingam", it intoned, "I'll do you no harm if you build me a temple."

Indeed, none of this was mysterious. Nor was it puzzling, since it did not give Mr. Kandan pause, that within the month, led on by various dreams and strange visitations, Mr. Jampulingam was able to get the *veḷḷāḷar* of Mandur, and even some of the other castes, interested enough to, in fact, build the temple. What *was* odd enough to raise Mr. Kandan's eyebrows and crease his brow, though, was the fact of it having been Mr. Jampulingam at all.

For although Mandur's local mythology is shot through with tales about the hidden spiritual depths of the seemingly unworthy, there is no way that Mr. Kandan could regard Mr. Jampulingam as being blessed with such

depths. Generally such tales illustrate the spiritual mobility that one kind of Tamil, Hindu society foregrounds in contrast to the social mobility it hides. Hence, the "heroes" of such tales come to a new understanding, a new spiritual rebirth, while remaining socially the same. Arjuna on the field of truth is the high paradigm here. But Mr. Jampulingam, Mr. Kandan was quick to point out, came to no such new understanding -- or if he did, it did not reveal itself to the people who knew him. If he had raised hell before, he raised worse hell after the cobra dropped -- once, that is, he got that temple built. So why? Why would the god pick Mr. Jampulingam as the medium of its message -- supposedly so unworthy, childish, nasty, even "loose", Mr. Jampulingam? Mr. Kandan raised the issue...

...and dropped it without an answer.

Without batting an eyelid, Mr. Kandan started talking about the snake. He knew, of course, the general significance of such a cobra. The Cobra was one of the 16 thousand forms Vishnu could assume. A *nākatampirāṉ*, as well, was a bed to Vishnu, an ornament for Shiva and Uma, the true identity of the planets Raku and Keethu, the source of the bead within the bell of the Goddess Pattini's anklet, and, of course, it was with a cobra that the gods spun the ladle that whipped up the nectar of eternity out of the ocean. Yet he had worried about the local and particular identity of the snake, and had wondered if it could be related to another snake that he had once seen in the village of Pandaravelli, that was also black, like the one that fell on Mr. Jampulingam. So he went to that village and interviewed a number of people, passing up the unreliable witnesses who knew things only by their own experience in favour of those, more trustworthy, who remembered the time-tested, and therefore more likely, stories of dead relations. Thus he discovered that there had once been a white snake in Pandaravelli called "*canku pālakaṉ*" that had married a black snake, whose name was now unknown, and that this union had produced another white snake, equally sacred. The married snakes, together, and their daughter had each had their own temple, and the income from these temples had been good, until some "rogues" from far away across the Batticaloa lagoon had come by boat to use a secret "medicine" to cause the youngest white snake to flee its temple. After looting the young snake's temple, the rogues had taken their loot to boast of their deed in the temple of the parent snakes. When the father snake, the black one, had attacked them, the rogues had shot him. This so enraged the white snake, that she had, first, blinded them all, and then, for good and all, cursed their families, causing all their relations to die off, and their clans to

die out. But this still left the white snake, *Canku pālakan*, alone in her grief. Thus, when a new, black snake, named "Katkotakum",[9] tried to wed her, she fought with him and drove him off. It was this black snake, then, driven off by the white cobra *Canku pālakan*, that had come to Mandur many years before, only much later to manifest itself to the world, by means of Mr. Jampulingam.

And this was the end of what Kandan had to say. Was this, then, a kind of explanation? Would it be committing an error to read it that way? On the other hand, would it be fair not to? Just what, in the end, does it mean? Above all, what was Kandan doing here? Or what am I allowed to say he was doing...?

But before answering any of these questions in the ways anthropologists have generally been accustomed to answer them, I need to know whether I can consider what Mr. Kandan was trying to do as a kind of scholarly act, even a kind of specifically Batticaloa District, Tamil, scholarly act, or whether I should consider it something else entirely. And that, willy-nilly, leads me back to the question I embedded earlier in the text -- Bourdieu's question: does my being, however imperfectly, a kind of scholar make it impossible for me to understand, or even see, non-scholars? Am I the prisoner of my study, even in the field?

We need to ask what an intellectual is.

If I were to ask you to sit back, close your eyes, and imagine, for a moment, a typical Western-style intellectual -- not any particular intellectual but, as it were, the archetype, the kind of icon one could use in an advertising campaign for an expensive whiskey, or as a talking head for a BBC documentary on something fairly serious and tweedy -- what would spring to mind? I would imagine a whole context: books, stacks of paper, fireplace, desk, and a man (significantly a male) with rumpled hair, slightly bent spectacles, a quizzical expression more than half amused, a twinkling in eyes less than completely calm, and that kind of aloneness Westerners like me tend to settle over intellectuals like a cassock (especially over those sequestered in the Academies) to set them apart from people more mired in the bustling,

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9 My fieldnotes do not reveal the Tamil spelling of this name. I just copied down what I heard.

hard-knocking, lucre-mad, and, above all, partisan, midst of things.

This ghostly reflection, of course, is not an accurate portrait of Western intellectuals; there are too many Susan Sontags and Norman Mailers running about for any such picture to fit. Nor is it one in whose reality many Westerners still believe; even "thirty-something", an American TV programme that was a kind of early 1990s whelming up out of the US Boomer *mundi*, presented its single academic hero as more beclouded by his fragile employability than by the joys and terrors of the life intellectual. And for Sri Lankans the notion that the hallmark of what Bourdieu calls the "scholarly point of view" is sequestered seclusion must be laughable -- one only need think of the career and recent, tragic assassination of Neelam Tiruchelvam. But it is a picture of "the intellectual" that most can, at least, recognize, and which harks back to a tradition in the West of monastically isolating the thinker from the life she (though, originally, "he") reflected upon, very much as if that thinker were a "mind", (surely an apt metonym for intellectuals), that must be detached from its distracting "body" (body politic?, body of opinion?) in order to obtain enough disinterested, solitary, purity of motive to wrest valuable thought from a world otherwise all too beguiling.

A corollary to this kind of decapitation, of course, is the question of how one is to keep *nous* down on the farm once it has seen "Paree" -- though perhaps "Wall Street" or "inside the beltway" (as Americans say of those who catch Washington D.C. fever in the US) would fit better here. Matthew Arnold's concern with the pollution of "fresh wits" by "this strange disease of modern life", which caused him to advise his Scholar Gipsy to "Wave us away, and keep thy solitude", is but a 19th century expression of a traditional nostalgia for a metaphysically pure, wholly scholarly, form of life, free of all worldly distraction. It is, I think, a nostalgia for a kind of life that has not left us to this day, however much we may have criticized it as the dream of an elite, and however rarely it is now, or ever really was, true in practice. It has not left us, I believe, because for a very few, very privileged people, the detached life of the mind, whatever one may determine about the complex problem of its value, still goes on -- at least as a very stubbornly held ideal.

Especially, perhaps, in France. Hence, in this regard, Pierre Bourdieu has made his intriguing argument. He claims to be able to discern, in all intellectuals and *especially* in professional academics (1990: 381), a uniquely scholastic point of view, which he sees as made possible by the

Procrustean, "institutionalized situation of studious leisure" characteristic of academia (381). Academics, for Bourdieu, are people who have been "paid to play seriously" (381). That is, as people freed by their institutional settings from the onerous and time-consuming necessities of survival, academics can play with words, ideas, and objects, in ways that people who must use such things for immediate, practical ends cannot. So, when a policeman, on the job, says, "Stop right there!", he means, and can only survive by being taken as meaning, one thing. However, that same sentence, perused by a time-rich academic, can be played around with enough to reveal many things: a prescriptive grammar, a depth grammar, various socio-linguistic properties, a disciplinary technology, a kind of cultural rhetoric, and so on, till all changes are rung, and the ringers are exhausted. The scholarly view is a cornucopia of understandings.

Now, according to Bourdieu, there is about all this, as the old joke goes, some good news and some bad news. The good news is that the academic vision *Homo Academicus* has (as a product of her withdrawal from necessity into the cocoon of the academy) allowed her to develop, to the fullest, what Bourdieu calls her "universal anthropological possibilities" -- that is, her abilities to develop logical arguments, Kantian aesthetic perceptions, and to "perform perfectly rigorous moral acts" (whatever they are!), all of which things Bourdieu sees as nefariously limited social privileges that all should have, and that *Homo Academicus* is lucky to have obtained (386). *Homo Academicus* is especially lucky to have obtained these privileges because development of them is one way to gain entrance into the academic arena where the "struggle" to obtain, what Bourdieu calls, "a legitimate monopoly over the universal"(386) goes on. The bad news, and it is news particularly bad for social scientists, is that the above virtues of the scholarly view are the very rocks upon which social scientific analyses founder, time and time again.

Basically, the problem is this: when social scientists, being scholars, "naturally" see the human actions they are studying from a scholarly point of view, they grant what are, in fact, practical, context-bound, univocal and particular activities a "meta", context-free, multivocal and "universal" significance that they do not have for the agents who did them. As Bourdieu would say, "the fundamental anthropological fallacy consists in injecting the meta- into practices"(382). Thus, for example, what would be, in Tamil Sri Lanka, plans to marry one's son to the mate with the largest dowry and the most prestigious relations would get reread at "another level" by Bourdieu's

straw anthropologist, as the completion of the social algebra of matrilateral cross-cousin marriage. And so on. Always the scholar moves beyond the limited meaning of the act in the eyes of the participants, to all the things the act could possibly be *made to mean* if only said participants had the time and freedom from necessity that, by and large, only academics have, to play with it. What is worse, social scientists can never see the nature of their error because the very social preconditions that have made them the scholars they are -- the years and years of protection from immediate economic want, the emphasis on careful analysis rather than rushing to judgement, the time for the working out of all possible angles, and the fear of having one's cultural products rejected by the special "market" of academia for not meeting scholarly tests of logical neatness and coherence -- have bred in them a set of unconscious dispositions, what Bourdieu calls "scholastic doxa"(381), that are precisely opposite in character from the pragmatic doxa underlying most of the practices scholars are trying, and failing, to understand. Thus does Bourdieu hoist academia by its own petard.

Now there are any number of problems with Bourdieu's interesting thesis. For one thing, of course, the picture he paints of the world is not only appallingly depressing, but also, somehow, innocent. Imagine it: "here", in the academy, the elite band of anthropologically actualized scholars, isolated in ludic reverie, carry on their various, glass bead games in coherent irrelevance; "there", out in the world, driven by hunger and spite, the vast mass of incomplete humankind continues the practical business of getting on, however fuzzy, incoherent, limited, and dull that might be, or might make them. Aside from being something of a cartoon, this portrait of western society could probably not be maintained by anyone with a grisly, first-hand knowledge of gipsy-scholar life there in the new global economy, or, for that matter, anyone who has made a careful reading of, say, the competitive combat Watson describes so well in the *The Double Helix* (1976). Some of the scholastic (if not epistemological) *doxa* that Bourdieu does not discuss are political and ecnomomic: the need to appeal to deans, the need to compromise with the board of trustees, grantsmanship, worrying either about accuracy in Academia or "political correctness", worrying about taxes, the car loan, or whether one will get medical coverage next year. And so forth.

Ethnographic verisimilitude aside, Bourdieu's picture has other, deeper, problems that become exposed as, as it were, clues to his distemper, when we try to see where assuming he is right about the divorce between the worldview of the scholar and the worldview of those in practice would leave

us. For one cannot avoid, in this, the question of whether any kind of analysis can escape from injecting the "meta" into practice, given that analysis or even description *per se* seems to require a certain amount of nipping and tucking of experience even to be understandable. Is not the alternative to be struck dumb? One clue is here. Along the same lines, one has to wonder how the notion of "practice" itself eludes being an injection of the "meta" into the worldly things Bourdieu applies it to. For a practice-- say, volleyball or writing a *kalvuttu* - is not, in a sense, a *practice* to a practitioner -- it is, simply, playing volleyball or writing a *kalvuttu*. For the doers of the above to be also doing a "practice", in Bourdieu's now overdeveloped sense, would be for them to be doing something else as well as pushing a ball over a net or crafting a polemical myth. And although this very thing was, I know, Bourdieu's original point, I think it got lost to the very dynamic he warns us about: practice has become the "meta-" of a theory of practice.

What a shame.

But Bourdieu's *ur* point, that scholars tend to add the meta- to what they are analyzing, costing them any real understanding of what the actors they hope to comprehend are really doing, if such a comprehension is their aim, continues to have real muscle, partly, I suppose, because it is a very old point. This is pretty much what Geertz (1977) was getting at when he wrote about those "turtles all the way down." It was, even more, the still point at the center of Ludwig Wittgenstein's later philosophy, and the reason why he thought modern philosophy, as it was being done when he wrote, was really a kind of disease to be gotten over rather than something worthy of being carried on. Indeed, Wittgenstein's point of view is really more radical than Bourdieu's. The very kind of ludic exercises that Bourdieu sees as the highest form of anthropological actualization (however limited they might be in thinking about humans) involve precisely what, for Wittgenstein, is most wrong with modern epistemological inquiry; that it is, to quote him, like "a wheel turning without reference to the rest of the machine". For Wittgenstein, then, no further description, however cleverly agent-minded and mindful of life's limitations, could comprehend life. One can only do that by, as it were, living with one's eyes open, comparing, contrasting, thereby trying to gain a "perspicuous representation", or a "view over the whole", from within the to

and fro of things (Wittgenstein 1953: 49e).[10] And perhaps, for related but even harsher reasons, this is why Dorinne Kondo, in a quotation from her work that George Marcus selected as a comment on Bourdieu's article on the scholastic view, just could not see the "presumed distinction between the academy and the real world" but only "a battleground and a site of struggle" (Marcus 1990:393).[11]

All fine and good. But how does any of the above help us to understand Mr. Kandan's *kalvuttu*? The problem, as I remember, was as follows. Mr. Kandan, first, seemed to have posed a question: how could the

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[10] See also Whitaker 1996:1-13.

[11] This, of course, gives the impression that I am highly critical of Bourdieu's whole project. Actually, nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, in one way, this essay itself might be read as an example of "reflexive sociology" and, thus, a kind of subtle homage to Bourdieu. And, indeed, my own work has attempted, in a much humbler way, something similar -- even to the extent of being inspired by the same philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein (See Whitaker 1999,1996). My concern here is that Bourdieu's attempt to surmount the social sciences' Cartesian dichotomies, and his critique of their intellectualist missreadings of practice, run the risk of themselves bringing into play a new dichotomy, a new "objectivist" shoal upon which the befogged social scientist might run aground, and at the risk of wrecking more than merely her own accuracy. Careful ethnography, as a kind of "fieldwork in philosophy", to borrow another of Bourdieu's phrases (Brown and Szueman 2000: v), reveals, I think, not the sharp divide between privileged and practical worlds that Bourdieu assumes but incoherences and multiple practices everywhere. It is a key feature of Bourdieu's analysis of *Homo Academicus* that this is so for their world; that, indeed, is the whole point of his analysis. It should be no surprise then that the same complexity of possibilities should be found outside France, outside the Academy, and among those denied the privileges of the life intellectual. Nor is this is to deny Bourdieu's critique of the volunteerist illusions of American "rational choice" theorists. I agree with them; but even socialized agents are capable of moving strategically (if not freely) between a multiple (if finite) number forms of life. Indeed, it is hard to see how the rough and tumble of social life would be possible without this multiplicity. Nor should we be surprised if some of these various social spaces, as hidey-holes within the vaster structures of more stultifying fields of force, bear a certain family resemblance to what we Academics do.

god have used such a disreputable person as Mr. Jampulingam to communicate its need for a temple to the *veḷḷāḷar* people of Mandur? Then, apparently dropping the question, Mr. Kandan went on to tell a long tale about the origin of the holy snake that dropped on the fellow. Now, if one accepts Bourdieu's thesis in unmodified fashion, one must stop the enquiry, for Mr. Kandan is cast out into the world of practice, and becomes unreachable. Not being, by definition and *doxa*, a scholar, even if he is regarded as such in Mandur, one cannot impute a scholarly disposition to his raising of the initial point. So Mr. Kandan is struck dumb, and his words are effaced. What happens, then, if we ignore Bourdieu altogether, accept Mr. Kandan's struggle as all of ours, and impute to him the same drive for coherence and the whole story that any scholar should have? What, then, if we absorb him? Well, we could do this -- by, for example, reading the story of how the snake got to Mandur as, somehow, a comment on how Mr. Jampulingam did as well. Indeed, perhaps we could see it as a bit of cultural rhetoric, illustrating the improbable way humans are led to destiny by revealing how even gods are by accidents led to theirs. This would be a fine reading of the *kalvuttu* that Mr. Kandan was planning to write, but I do not believe a word of it. It would truly be, in Bourdieu's sense, an injection of the meta into Mr. Kandan's "practice".

So what to do?

Suppose, then, we use a weaker form of Bourdieu's thesis. Let us try this: any attempt to read both Mr. Kandan's question and his subsequent dropping of the issue of Mr. Jampulingam as a sort of Magister-ludi-style *playing* with the possibilities fails, not for the negative reason that Mr. Kandan, ensconced as he is in the *doxa* of practice, is either too desperate or too dull to *play*, but for the positive reason that the form of scholarship he is engaged in -- the Tamil business of being a polemical *pulavar*, and even the wider domain of being an intellectual *per se* (i.e., a *paticca akkal*) - would regard any move in the game that would disengage one from the practical life as being illegitimate. Indeed, I would go so far as to suggest that the public ethics of being an Batticaloa, Tamil, intellectual have here crept into the operation of Mr. Kandan's intellectuality, but not in secret, as Bourdieu's oddly Freudian-styled "*doxa*" would have it, but openly, self-reflexively, and as a stated ideal. If this is so, then what we confronted in Mr. Kandan's silence was not the failure of a practice-dulled mind, but the sinewy flexing of a well-muscled, Tamil intellectuality that was strong enough to stop analysis, despite the obvious temptation Jampulingam's miracle offered of an

escape into pure scholarship. Precisely the sort of thought, in other words, that Bourdieu believes has eluded the Western human sciences. If I were Bourdieu, I guess I would be beating a path to Mr. Kandan's door.

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MARK P. WHITAKER

SOME RESPONSES TO COLONIAL/NEOCOLONIAL EDUCATION IN *FUNNY BOY, PETALS OF BLOOD, AND IN THE CASTLE OF MY SKIN*

I will preface my paper by quoting from the work of two postcolonial critics. Diana Brydon states, in "Commonwealth or Common Poverty: The New Literatures in English and the New Discourses of Marginality," that

> Caliban quickly tires of cursing Prospero. His speech is most compelling when he celebrates his own skills and love of place, and when he transforms himself from European creation into an autonomous indigene. (7)

The other extract is taken from Jo-Ann Wallace's "De-Scribing the Water-Babies: 'The Child' in Postcolonial Theory":

> It is as 'primitive', then, that 'the child' represents to the West our racial as well as our individual past; the child is that 'ancient piece of history,' to quote again from Kincaid, whose presence has left room, if not for theories, then for the parent-child logic of imperialist expansion.
>
> > There is obviously considerable slippage between constructions of 'the child' and of the native Other under imperialism ... (175)

Brydon's point is well taken. Postcolonial writers and critics should eventually discontinue the practice of attributing all problems faced by the former colonies to the West, and instead celebrate their own locale and culture. But Caliban will surely persist in cursing Prospero until the latter ceases to be a threat to the world he once ruled. Given the power and influence that the West continues to wield in the "Third World," there is no evidence to suggest that the "indigene" is even now "autonomous."

Prospero remains especially influential in the sphere of education. And it is in examining the function of the West in this regard that Jo-Ann Wallace's

comment, and indeed her entire article, becomes pertinent to my study. If the "native Other" is in fact a child, this "child" must be taught how to become an adult by the "advanced," "civilized" parent. Prospero assumed this role in colonial times, and this function is now performed by his former charges some of whom can do no more than preserve the structures created by him. As the authors of *Shakespeare's Caliban* suggest, "[t]he dependency created during the early years of colonization also leaves Caliban hopelessly enmeshed in a system not of his own making but essential to his survival" (160). Small wonder then that writers and critics continue to be preoccupied by the deleterious effects of English education on colonies and former colonies. This paper, therefore, makes a focussed study of the theme of education as rendered in George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953), Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* (1977) and Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* (1994)[1] with special reference to its effect on pedagogue and scholar. The temporal and spatial divergences that are immediately patent in my choice of authors, enhance, rather than hinder, a comparative study. An analysis of three novels written over a period of forty years by authors from three different countries allows one to explore the goals that are shared by colonial and neocolonial educators, and to scrutinize the different ways in which those who were subjected to such systems of education reacted to the same. Students in Lamming's novels, for instance, are politically naïve and unaware of their own strength. Consequently, they do not even try to engage with the "enemy." Ngugi's characters, on the other hand, employ a frontal attack, but their success is only temporary. The Kenyan educators who replace their British counterparts prove to be equally myopic and tyrannical, and have no qualms about using the total power of the state to crush any resistance. Selvadurai's protagonist is smarter than the rest. Realizing that open rebellion is futile, he infiltrates into the system, and exposes the same only when he is sure that his actions will cause maximum damage.

Chris Baldick, Gauri Vishwanathan, and other scholars have established the "social mission" that was so much a part of the dissemination of English. Vishwanathan comments:

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[1] The dates given in parentheses, here, indicate the years when the novels were first published and (excepting *Funny Boy*) not to the editions used in this study. Publication details of the actual texts employed are given in the "Works Cited."

> British colonial administrators, provoked by missionaries on the one hand and fears of native insubordination on the other, discovered an ally in English Literature to support them in maintaining control of the natives under the guise of a liberal education. (1987: 17).

This social mission was not confined to the teaching of English literature and language, however. The "subject" people also "learned a conqueror's language and perhaps that conqueror's values" (Vaughan 145); in other words, this project required that the cultural baggage associated with British Public schools be transferred to schools in the colonies. These children were taught "leadership," "discipline," "teamwork," "service," and the importance of possessing "all round" ability in sport and scholarship. It was hoped that they would, in turn, set an example to their less fortunate brethren once they took on positions of responsibility. These "values," though not too problematic when taken in isolation, become pernicious when coupled with the notion of total loyalty to queen/king and country. This idea is spelled out unambiguously by the Inspector in *The Castle*:

> The British Empire, you must remember, has always worked for the peace of the world. This was the job assigned to it by God, and if the Empire at anytime has failed to bring about that peace, it was due to events and causes beyond its control. But remember, my dear boys, whatever happens in any part of this world, what ever happens to you in this island of Barbados, the pride and treasure of the Empire, we are always on the side of peace. You are with us and we are with you. And together we shall always walk in the will of the God. (38)

As a sensitive observer of the effects of education on colonial subjects, Lamming has few peers. This sensitivity is especially patent in his portrayal of the head teacher to whose lot falls the task of ensuring that the colonial project succeeds at Groddeck's. The head teacher is indeed a challenge to his creator. Given the abhorrent system that he represents, Lamming could have chosen to make the head teacher the subject of a satirical sketch. But Lamming understands the complex processes that have created the head teacher, although this knowledge does not prompt him to hold back any criticism. It is true that the head teacher is privileged, but he has to play a duplicitous role to maintain this position. Consider the sequence in which the author describes the head teacher and the Inspector:

> They made a striking contrast in appearance, but they seemed in a way to belong to the same thing. The inspector was white and smooth and cool like a pebble. The head teacher's face richer and stronger and burnt black in the sun. It was pleasing to watch them talk in that way the villagers called man to man, although it didn't seem altogether a case of man to man. They watched each other at times as a cat would watch a mouse, playfully but seriously. The inspector smiled and the head teacher smiled back, and the cat in each smiled too. It was not a reassuring smile. (39-40)

Soon after the narrator declares that the inspector's smile was smooth "like the surface of pus" which "... gathered and secreted so much so quietly and so stealthily" (40). The head teacher, on the other hand, "has the bright-black slouching carriage of the leech" (40). These words are chosen with great care to enunciate that some colonials are parasites who feed on a system that is rotten. The head teacher's posturing enables him to enjoy the power, position, and prestige that are reserved for such lackeys, but his position is at best precarious. The "ready response, the manufactured word or phrase, and the cultivated face" (66) do not always achieve the desired result because an unforseen occurrence could easily undermine years of effort--witness his irrational response to the "loud giggle" during the Empire day celebrations:

> His face was coarse and savage and sad. It was difficult to understand when he spoke. His voice was low and choked with a kind of terror. "I've never wanted it said that my boys are hooligans ... grinning like jackasses when respectable people are around. I've always wanted it said that the boys at Groddeck's Boy School were gentlemen. But gentlemen don't grin and giggle like buffoons, and in the presence of respectable people, people of power and authority." (42-43)

Embarrassed by this blemish to what he considers is a perfect performance, and painfully aware that this incident could affect his future, he victimizes a helpless child.

It becomes apparent, as the sequence continues, however, that the principal's problems are more complex than originally suggested. Not only is this self-righteous, moralistic man an alcoholic, but his chance discovery that his wife is cheating on him makes his position even more hazardous. The section in which the principal muses over his wife's infidelity is, as Boxill suggests, somewhat

overwritten (214), but it still captures "the extent to which the head teacher's integrity has been undermined on private and public levels by the precariousness of his social position" (Pacquet 18). On the one hand, his years as a teacher have taught him that one "couldn't trust a subordinate" (66)--consequently, his colleague's dalliance with his wife could not be brushed aside--on the other hand, "the village head teacher represented the unattainable ideal [to the villagers]. He had to live in a way which they admired and respected but did not greatly care to follow" (67). What makes matters even more complicated is that the Inspector, the most logical person to consult in such a situation, will not help him either because such individuals "would never admit confidence in a matter that related to their work. These English officials had an almost inhuman sense of the right distance to keep in human relations" (69). Partha Chatterjee's comment that "[t]he colonial middle class ... was simultaneously placed in a position of subordination in one relation and a position of domination in another" (36) only partially explains the dilemmas facing this representative of the middle class. The head teacher is hounded into immobility by these contradictory forces. After a long period of deliberation, the head teacher's "mind had become more undisciplined.... He was farther away from a decision than he was when he started to think of one" (69). Ngugi wa Thiong'o's observations about "middle men" in a colonial context are indeed very relevant here: "Rejected in the social world of the white rulers and alienated from the masses by their jobs and education, they turn their frustrations inward, against themselves, or else vent it on their own people" (1972, 117).

Ironmonger, Fraudsham, Chui, Munira, and Karega are just some of the educators introduced in *Petals of Blood*. Ironmonger, though presented as "... a different sort of white man ... a gentle old man who looked more a farmer than a missionary headmaster" (28), plays an important role in forming Chui's attitudes to the British. Recognizing Chui's potential for leadership and scholarship, Ironmonger and his wife treat him like the "son they had never had" (28). This preferential treatment surely seduces Chui into accepting the "subservient ideology of colonialist education in quest of libertarian education" (Amuta 147). Ironmonger's replacement by Fraudsham is reminiscent of Mr. Brown's replacement by the militant Rev. Smith in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Fraudsham, a "brilliant," Cambridge-educated, ex-serviceman, adopts a more rigorous policy in educating boys in Siriana. Munira recollects Fraudsham's policies thus:

> Now, my boys, trousers are quite out of the question in the tropics. He sketched a profile of an imaginary thick-lipped African in a grey woollen suit, a sun helmet, a white starched stiff

> collar and tie, and laughed contemptuously. Don't emulate this man. There was to be no rice in our meals: the school did not wish to turn out men who would want to live beyond their means. And no shoes, my boys, except on the day of worship: the school did not want to turn out black Europeans but true Africans who do not look down on the *innocence and simple ways of their ancestors*. At the same time, we had to grow up strong in God and Empire. It was the two that had got rid of Hitler. (29; emphasis added)

To achieve these objectives, boys are forced to participate in the "manly pursuits" that are so much a part of the British Public school: "The strength to serve: sports, cross-country races, cold showers at five in the morning became compulsory" (29). These are accompanied by morning and evening drill, the saluting of the Union Jack, and regular visits to the chapel where boys are made to sing "[w]ash me Redeemer, and I shall be whiter than snow" (29). The insidious nature of Fraudsham's ideology is lost on Chui, Munira, and the rest who take action to ensure that the privileges they enjoyed during Ironmonger's tenure are restored. By insisting on unshod feet and meals without rice, and by invoking the "innocence and simple ways of their ancestors," Fraudsham is at one level contrasting Africans unfavourably with their Western counterparts who are presumably "experienced" and "sophisticated;" at another level, however, Fraudsham is here providing an excellent example of a phenomenon that Bhabha refers to in "Of Mimicry and Man":

> ... colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. (86)

Bhabha provides many illustrations to reinforce his argument, and one in particular describes how Charles Grant "... suggested ... a process of reform through which Christian doctrines might collude with divisive caste practices to prevent dangerous political alliances [in India]" (87). Although boys in Siriana are supposed to be given a liberal education based on the British model, Fraudsham realizes, perhaps, that the kind of educated African produced by Ironmonger's method could be dangerous. Consequently, he applies "the rule of colonial difference" (Chatterjee 18) through which he ensures that Africans will continue to

serve "God and Empire;" but as soldiers or underlings, not as gentleman. Such a practice preserves the distinction between colonial master and colonial.

Fraudsham's resolution that his pet dog, Lizzie, be given a funeral in which boys from Siriana too would participate, of course, discloses a weakness in a man who had proved indestructible thus far. Not only do they refuse to carry out Fraudsham's demands, but they increase their demands, when Fraudsham and the establishment, realizing that the students are intransigent, appeal for compromise. Fraudsham's defeat, is thus inevitable.

In *Decolonisation of the Mind*, Ngugi gives the following extract from the recommendations of a working committee that was set up after the conference on "The Teaching of African Literature in Kenyan Schools" which was held in 1974:

> That Africa as a continent has been a victim of forces of colonial exploitation, oppression and human degradation. In the field of culture she was taught to look on Europe as her teacher and the centre of man's civilization, and herself as a pupil. In this event Western culture became the centre of Africa's process of learning, and Africa was relegated to the background. Africa uncritically imbibed values that were alien and had no immediate relevance to her people. Thus was the richness of Africa's cultural heritage degraded, and her people labelled as primitive and savage. The colonizer's values were placed in the limelight, and in the process, evolved a new African who denied his original image, and exhibited a considerable lack of confidence in his creative potential (qtd. in Ngugi 1986b, 100).

If such a system of education (which was common to most outposts of the empire) created colonial stooges like the head teacher in *The Castle*, it produced even more dangerous, neocolonial educators, like Chui, who are prepared to sacrifice the legitimate aspirations of Kenyans for personal ends. Chui is one of the "walking lies" that Sartre refers to in his preface to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (7); he is, in fact, more of a "fraud" and a "sham" than Fraudsham--although he was a colonialist to the core, Fraudsham believed in his cause and worked hard to ensure its success. The much vaunted public school system which was transplanted in the colonies to produce "men of character" who would take on the burden of ruling the empire could scarcely have created a better colonial than Chui. Ngugi's portrayal of Chui is very interesting in this regard:

> He was neat with a style all his own in doing things: from quoting bits from Shakespeare to wearing clothes. Even the drab school uniform of grey trousers, a white starched shirt, a blue jacket and a tie carrying the school motto, *For God and Empire*, looked as if it was specially tailored to fit him....
>
> He was the star in sports, in everything: Chui this, Chui that, Chui, Chui, Chui everywhere. The breezy mountain air in which the English settlers had found a home-climate had formed his sinewy muscles: to watch him play football, to watch that athletic swing of his body as he dribbled the ball with sudden swerves to the left or to the right to deceive an opponent, that was a pleasure indeed. Shake, shake, shake the ball, the looking-on crowd would shout themselves hoarse. He was a performer, playing to a delirious gallery. (27-28)

This description, which seems to be taken straight out of the pages of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, establishes that Chui is the "whitewashed native" *par excellence*. Of course, he organises a strike against Cambridge Fraudsham, the principal. But as has already been mentioned, this strike was not undertaken against colonial education *per se*. Chui and the other leaders conduct the strike because the new headmaster discards the notion that Africans should be made into "gentlemen," and, instead, wants to make them fit for the army. They object to this new system which would "make them grow up strong in God and the Empire" without rewarding them with the privileges that had previously accompanied colonial education.

Chui, a folk hero to generations of Siriana students, was made headmaster to fulfil an "African dream" (173). As Karega says, "We wanted to be taught African literature, African history, for we wanted to know ourselves better. Why should ourselves [sic] be reflected in white snows, spring flowers fluttering by on icy lakes?" (170). Although Karega and others are devastated by Chui's subsequent deeds as headmaster, Chui's actions are predictable indeed. Like the "whitewashed" colonials in Sartre's preface, he can only "echo" the pronouncements and principles of his English predecessors. Chui, furthermore, is smart enough to realise that he needs a power base if he is to maintain control over affairs. He has to choose "between the two mutually opposed forces in Africa today: an imperialist tradition on [sic] hand and a resistance tradition on the other" (Ngugi 1986b, 2). Chui settles for the established force and betrays the emerging, Africanisation movement that had forced the authorities to bring him to

Siriana as Headmaster in the first place:

> ... whoever heard of African, Chinese, or Greek mathematics and science? What mattered was good teachers and sound content: history was history: literature was literature, and nothing to do with the colour of one's skin. The school had to strive for what a famous educator had described as the best that had been taught and written in the world.... He would never have a school run by rebels and gangsters and the European Foreigners would have nothing to fear. (172)

Rather than take the opportunity to make the school more acceptable to the aspirations of the young Africans who were trying to break out of colonial bondage, he sets about restoring the status quo, and in the process, destroys the momentum that Karega and the other enlightened students had achieved. As the previous quotation shows, he even invokes a dubious, "universalist" doctrine to appease the Europeans. When his reactionary methods meet with resistance, he retaliates with a chauvinism and a brutality that far outstrips the actions of Cambridge Fraudsham:

> We waited for words that would somehow still the doubt and the fear. He spoke and announced a set of rules. He thanked the teachers for the high standards and world-wide reputation of the school. It was his desire, nay his fervent prayer, that all the teachers would stay, knowing that he had not come to wreck but to build on what was already there: there would be no hasty programme of Africanisation, reckless speed invariably being the undoing of so many a fine school. There had been a recent breakdown in discipline and he vowed that with the help of all he would resolve it. Far from destroying the prefect system, he would inject it with new blood. Obedience was the royal road to order and stability, the only basis of sound education....
>
> We went on strike and again refused the divide-and-rule control tactics. Down with Chui: up with African populism: down with expatriates and foreign advisers; up with black power.
>
> Well the rest is common knowledge. Chui called in the riot squad which came to our school, and would you believe it, led by a European officer. We were all dispersed, with a few broken

> bones and skulls. The school was closed and when it reopened I was among the ten or so not allowed to sign for re-admission. (171-73)

In his early fiction, Ngugi had posited education as a means whereby the Africans could defeat the colonialists. Here, however, education plays a very negative role. In an article entitled "The Robber and the Robbed," Ngugi explains this phenomenon, thus:

> If the robbers of wealth are able to instil images of defeat, unsureness, division, inferiority complex, helplessness, fawning, abject humility, slavishness in the minds of the robbed, then they can eat their loot in comfort and sleep in peace. Thus, it has always been in the interests of a robbing minority to control the minds, the consciousness of the working majority--the true producers of wealth--by all the educational, literary, communicational, cultural and aesthetic means at their disposal. (Ngugi 1981, 123-24)

This is exactly what Chui succeeds in doing at Siriana. Himself a product of colonial education that had practised the principle of "divide and rule" and created in his mind the notion that European culture was superior, he gives even more prominence to this public school culture, and strengthens the prefect system when he is given the opportunity to administer Siriana, for experience has shown him that this is one way that vested interests can reinforce and perpetuate their power. Thus an institution that could have been transformed to counter neocolonialism, is used, instead, to restore the *status quo*.

Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*, is situated in the Sri Lanka of the late 70s and early 80s, a Sri Lanka that had enjoyed Independence for around thirty years. The island had severed yet another tie with Britain by becoming a republic in 1972. The educational system as portrayed by Selvadurai is little different from those described by Lamming and Ngugi, however. In Black Tie, Selvadurai presents a character who is reminiscent of the head teacher in Lamming's novel. Selvadurai informed Afdhel Aziz during an interview that "Black Tie ... is actually a compilation of various masters I had at school" (21). The same could be said for The Victoria Academy. Although the author has given it a fictitious name, it is apparent from the evidence given in the novel that The Victoria Academy is a conflation of Trinity College, Kandy; St Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia; and Royal College, Colombo--perhaps the most "prestigious" boys' schools in the

country. The first two are private schools (the Sri Lankan equivalent to the British public schools) with Christian connections, and the third was founded by the British as the premier government school in the island.[2]

In describing Black Tie and life at the Queen Victoria Academy, Selvadurai has made maximum use of his artist's licence. Arjie encounters a man with "a sola topee, that white domed hat I had only seen in photographs from the time the British ruled Sri Lanka" (214). Black Tie, furthermore, "wore a carefully pressed white suit that also belonged to another era, a white shirt, and, of course, the black tie" (214). Consider also Diggy's description of the kinds of punishment given by Black Tie:

> Once, he slapped a boy and broke some of his teeth. Another boy got caned so severely his trousers tore. Then he made the boy kneel in the sun until he fainted. (211).

That Diggy was not exaggerating Black Tie's severity is confirmed when both Arjie and Shehan become one of the principal's "ills and burdens" and suffer the consequences of his cruel punishments. Mr. Sunderalingam rationalizes Black Tie's conduct by informing Arjie that "... the old principal, Mr. Lawton, raised him, and educated him. The values he was taught are the ones he still holds on to, so you must not blame him too much for what he did to you" (246). One of these values, he explains, is that "you can beat knowledge into a student" (245). By describing Black Tie's eccentric, outmoded attire, Selvadurai's creates an image of the proverbial "Brown Sahib." The punishments he ascribes to Black Tie, however, are more problematic. Although these forms of "correction" were commonplace in a previous age,[3] it is improbable that any principal serving in such a "high profile" Sri Lankan school in the period under review could give the

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2 Trinity's school song is entitled "The Best School of All," the song that Argie is made to recite; St. Thomas' is situated "on the sea side of Galle Road" (212); and old boys, parents, educationalists, and others associated with Royal college (Selvadurai's old school) in the 70s and 80s were indeed "divided into two factions" (220). Some wished to retain the name given by the British, and others insisted that the school be renamed to honour the educator who had introduced "Free Education" to Sri Lanka.

3 Carl Muller's, *Once Upon a Tender Time* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1995), which is situated in pre-independence Sri Lanka, describes punishments that are equally severe.

kind of extreme punishment Diggy describes without being taken to task by the Parent Teachers Association, the Press, the National Educational Authority, or the police for that matter. To state that such excessive treatment was "improbable" in the 70s and 80s is not to say that it was impossible or that less extreme forms of punishment were not practised in these schools, however. Moreover, The violent beatings described in *Funny Boy* have intertextual parallels with a similar caning in *The Castle*. One could add that violence affects most areas of school life in this novel in a way it never did *The Castle* and *Petals of Blood*. The head teacher in Lamming's novel birches a student because he has been embarrassed in front of the white inspector. In such a context, any scapegoat will suffice. Fraudsham and Chui resort to violence (in the form of riot squads) when their positions are threatened by "rebellious" students. Violence and brutality, however, are endemic to the Victoria Academy. Arjie encounters violent behaviour in the quadrangle, in the classroom, in the toilets, and of course in the principal's office.

Selvadurai's fascination with violence has other ramifications, too. In Lamming's novel, there is a marked difference between the schools and the world "out there." Karega and others students in Siriana are more aware of social forces outside, but the educational system at Siriana continues "to obscure racism and other forms of oppression" (165), despite all their efforts to bring about change. What the text of *Funny Boy* discloses, however, is that a school, even a privileged school, can no longer be an ivory tower. It is compelled to react to, or is affected by, nationalist and other forms of pressure faced by other institutions in the country. "The Best School of All," in fact, prepares the reader for the carnage and destruction in the chapter that follows. The strains between Sinhalese and Tamils in school, for instance, is reflective of similar tensions in the country.

There is yet another factor which distinguishes *Funny Boy* from the other novels. The educational "establishment" in *The Castle* is represented by the head teacher and the inspector, and in *Petals of Blood* by Fraudsham and Chui. The institution is under no threat in the former and demands for Africanisation in the latter are made by students. It is significant that educational authorities, old boys, the Press, and the government collude in defeating the students in *Petals of Blood*. There are two "establishments" in the educational system in Selvadurai's novel, and these are represented by Lokubandara and Black Tie. Many private schools were taken over and "indigenized" between 1956 and 1965. This was consequent to the cry for "Sinhala only" and the other programmes of nationalization instituted by the Bandaranaike government of 1956. Still, some of the most "distinguished" schools in the country retained their identity by appealing to influential old boys in the cabinet of ministers whenever such a move was mooted. Resistance to change

became difficult with the passage of time, however, because the "nationalist lobby" could for its part expect support from a new generation of parliamentarians and ministers who had studied in "Swabasha" schools.

There is no doubt that Ngugi supports the students in the battle for supremacy between the students and the establishment in *Petals of Blood*. Although Black Tie's principles and those of Lokubandara are also placed in binary opposition, Selvadurai, unlike Ngugi, subscribes to neither position. Black Tie is forced to take desperate measures when Mr. Lokubandara tries to change the name, tone, and character of the school from one that is "too British" to one that is more indigenous in outlook. But Lokubandara's policies do not inspire much confidence either. The reader does not need Sunderalingam's comment "and if he [Black Tie] *is* overruled, Tamils like us will suffer" (246) to realize that the kind of nationalism being preached by Lokubandara is a form of jingoism. Lokubandara, who is a "political appointee" (212), tries to achieve his objectives by politicizing ruffians like Salgado who "can do whatever they like" (219) because of his patronage. The text implies that Lokubandara even approves the beating up of students like Cheliah. The principal, therefore, has some justification in fearing the new dispensation. Unfortunately, he stands for an old order that is equally reprehensible--hence Arjie's decision to "defeat" him.

To study parallels and contrasts in the attitudes and actions of these head teachers/principals is a rewarding exercise. But to focus exclusively on the teachers is to present a monolithic account of education in these regions. Students in Barbados, Kenya, and Sri Lanka were exposed to similar but not identical forms of colonial/neocolonial education, and their reaction to this received educational system demonstrates equally fascinating points of convergence and divergence. To Michel Pousse

> Lamming describes the school as a definite product of colonialism, geared to keep the pupils in ignorance and to ensure that the few who will fight their way up will be segregated from the rest of the herd, so that they can become modern overseers and not leaders who might advocate social upheaval. (55)

To this end, therefore, the schools deliberately insulate their students from having access to the kind of information that would have enabled them to question the liberality of these so-called liberal institutions. In *Petals of Blood*, the effects are reported and described, in *The Castle*, individual characters try to reconcile the misinformation and the irrelevant knowledge that is imposed on them at school

with the knowledge of their own history that they gather by chance:

> And it would appear that when this good and great queen came to the throne she ordered that those who weren't free should now become free. It was beginning to make sense. Now they could understand what this talk about freedom meant. One boy said that he had asked the teacher, but the teacher said he didn't know what the old people were talking about. They might have been getting dotish. Nobody ever had to make him free. (56-57)

Surely there is something wrong with an educational system which deliberately distorts or ignores crucial phases of a country's history? These children are at best groping in the dark. None of their teachers bother to inform them about their African heritage, Marcus Garvey, slavery, or the slave revolt in Santo Domingo. The educational system, on the whole, is sterile and irrelevant. All it does is to prepare children to become good colonial subjects.

The chapter in which Lamming focusses on G's life in his secondary school is perhaps the most disappointing in the whole book because it promises much and produces little. Lamming is here pithy to a fault. If the novel is to be read as G's *Bildungsroman*, one would expect the author to dwell at length on G's experiences in an institution which nurtured him during his formative years. The little he reveals, however, is most instructive. Lamming claims, in *The Pleasures of Exile*, that his secondary schooling "had one intention, that it was training me to forget and to be separate from the things that Papa was: peasant and alive" (228). G faces this predicament when he wins his scholarship. As a boy, G was rooted to his home, to his friends, and to Pa, yet this harmony is threatened as soon as he joins a secondary school, "which seemed a ship with a drunk crew" (218). Consider the following passage:

> Gradually the village receded from my consciousness although it wasn't possible for me to forget it.... They didn't mind having me around to hear what happened in the High School, but they had nothing to communicate since my allegiances, they thought, had been transferred to the other world. If I asserted myself they made it clear that I didn't belong ... Whether or not they wanted to they excluded me from their world, just as my memory of them and the village excluded me from the world of the High School. (219-20)

As G subsequently declares, "[i]t was though my roots had been snapped from the

centre of what I knew best, while I remained impotent to wrest what my fortunes had forced me into" (220). There is indeed an ironic parallel in the dilemmas faced by G and the village head teacher. If the latter is victimized because of his subservience to the British officials and by the high standards of conduct demanded of him by the villagers, G is equally frustrated by his village background and (despite his friendship with the enlightened teacher)[4] by the realization that he "didn't belong" (225) to his High School. As a consequence, G is rendered as impotent as the head teacher: "From the malaise of the High School I had drifted into the despair of the first assistant's world. Soon I found it difficult to cope with what I wanted" (226). He is so bewildered by the kind of education he has been subjected to that he is on his way to becoming what Philip Mason would call an "Ariel [who] is ... the good native, the moderate nationalist, the gradualist, usually content to wait until it pleases Prospero to give him his freedom" (qtd. in Vaughan 161).

Ironically, the only person who presents him with a counter discourse is Trumper who after his sojourn in the United States insists that " ... barring learning to count and write your name there ain't much in these school that will help you not to make a blasted mess of your life" (288). There are some critics who regard Trumper's role positively, and without many reservations.[5] Lamming remarks, in his introduction to the 1983 edition of *The Castle*, however, that colonialism remained after the exodus of the British from the West Indies in the "new colonial orchestration" (qtd. in Taylor 196) of the Americans, and Ramchand was one of the first to observe that "there are warning signs in the presentation of the newly-returned Trumper" (54). He is, indeed, something of a braggart who is almost too self-assured. He returns with a fascination for material possessions, which is evident not only in his dress, but also in sequences like the following:

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4 The first assistant who is "versatile, sensitive, and cultured" (226) could have conceivably provided G with a counter discourse. But he is an insubstantial character who never fulfils his potential in the novel.

5 See, for instance, Ngugi, "George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin," Homecoming* (New York: Laurence Hill, 1972) 110-23, and Charles R. Larson "Towards a Sense of Community: George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin," The Novel in the Third World* (Washington: Inscape, 1976), 89-108.

> There ain't much to say ... except that the United States is a place where a man-can-make pots-of-money.... 'Cause 'tis what they call high life ... Seems a next kind o' world. When I tell you I use to have two telephones and three 'lectric fans in a small place o' mine, you can sort o' get my meaning clear. (282)

Still, Trumper is deeply committed to the cause of the "Negro Race" (295). His volatile pronouncements on this subject shatter G's complacency. Living in a world in which the blacks are in the majority, and having been exposed to a public school education which had insulated him from many issues that involved people of his colour, G possesses only a vague idea of what it means to be black:

> I had nothing to say because I wasn't prepared for what had happened. Trumper made his own experience, the discovery of a race, a people, seem like a revelation. It was nothing I had known, and it didn't seem I could know it till I had lived it. (298)

Trumper's advice, furthermore, allows G to take another look at his own identity. Daizal Samad states throughout his thesis that "finding a sense of self" is a major motif in Caribbean novels, and especially in Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*. All the references to "the castle of my skin," the pebble that G once hid in the sand, and the many conversations among G, Trumper, and Boy Blue, as children, are part of this exploration for an authentic self. Even though Trumper's dictates might not be the final answer for G, his assertions alert him to a perspective that G had thus far ignored. Given Lamming's predilection for the "open-ended" novel[6] it is most unlikely that he would completely endorse a character, who as G concludes, "had found what he needed and there were no more problems to be worked out" (298). On the contrary, G, even at this stage, questions some of Trumper's dogmatic statements (296-98). Trumper's most important contribution is to create a sense of awareness in his intelligent and sensitive friend so that he could learn for himself--and even learn from Trumper's mistakes--"[t]o be part of something which you didn't know and which *if* Trumper was right it was *my* [G's] duty to discover" (299; emphasis added). Troubled by Trumper's pronouncements, and dissatisfied with what he had learned in Barbados, G chooses the typically West Indian "solution" of exile, where he could "start with a clean record" (252).

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6 Consider Lamming's comments in an interview with Birbalsingh, *JCL* 18.1 (1988): 186.

Students and graduates from Siriana are more alert politically than their counterparts in Barbados. They are quick to see the dangers inherent in colonial and neocolonial education. But as Karega so rightly observes, in a moment of realization, "the three [Munira, the lawyer, and Karega] had seen different Sirianas and different Fraudshams and maybe they were not moved by the same things" (166). He feels at this moment that he "might have been unfair to Munira" for judging his conduct. One of the strategies Ngugi often uses is that of showing the reaction of different people to an important event or institution. In *A Grain of Wheat*, he shows how several individuals respond to the prospect of Independence. In *Petals of Blood*, he examines how Munira and others reacted to Siriana education.

The omniscient narrator notes, in explaining Munira's inability to achieve complete sexual satisfaction with Wanja, that "even with Wanja he found that he was still a prisoner of his own upbringing and Siriana missionary education" (72). Munira is effete, insecure, and even irrationally vindictive; but all this is the result of his being "haunted by the past that had always shadowed him" (270), and the social conditions that had influenced him from childhood.

Munira is the son of an individual who had betrayed the revolution and become a supporter of the British. By ruthlessly exploiting the peasants and by adopting a very harsh, puritanical brand of Christianity, Munira's father had become wealthy, powerful, and influential. The tyranny that he demonstrated to the villagers was also carried over to his home, and his attitude ensures that Munira's personality never develops. Munira is temperamentally unsuited to follow in his father's footsteps, and the open contempt that his father displays towards him gives Munira a sense of insecurity which later degenerates into an inferiority complex. His problems increase at Siriana, an institution which promotes subservience among students. However, this self-confessed mediocrity, cannot even become a true lackey:

> I could never quite lick anybody's boots. I could never even shine dishes to brightness brighter than bright, or out-Jesus ... ehh ... Mr Christ. To be sure I was never prominent in anything. In class, I was average. In sports I had not the limbs--I had not the will. (27)

Munira, Chui, and Karega are all victimized in school. But while the latter two find some concrete means of recovering from their plight--one becomes a

capitalist, the other embraces socialism--Munira has neither the intellect nor the strength of character to take a definite stand. He leaves school as an adolescent, and it is this adolescent attitude to life which prevents him from succeeding in the adult world. Siriana then had produced an individual who insisted on "depersoning" (30) himself, one who wished to remain "burrowed into the earth" (30).

Since the lawyer is a peripheral character in this novel, his experiences in Siriana are not treated in any great depth. But his contribution is valuable for two reasons: he articulates the evils of Siriana that characters, like Munira, sense but are unable to give expression to, and he also places the last strike at Siriana in another perspective. The lawyer's experiences in America and his realization on returning to Kenya that his countrymen were "serving the same monster-god [money]" (166) make him conclude:

> And now I saw in the clear light of day the role that the Fraudshams of the colonial world played to create all of us black zombies dancing pornography in blue hills while our people are dying of hunger, while our people cannot afford decent shelter and decent schools for their children. And we are happy, we are happy that we are called stable and civilized and intelligent! (166)

In keeping with his socialist principles, he establishes a practice in indigent regions hoping to use his learning and skills to alleviate the lot of the poor. He realises eventually, however, that he too is perilously close to serving the same monster god of money, despite his intentions. His depression is relieved only when he hears about the strike in Siriana. He sees in the actions of the strikers, "a new youth emerging, a youth freed from the direct shame and humiliation of the past and hence not so spiritually wounded as the those who had gone before" (167). He concludes that "Fraudsham and all the black Fraudshams ... have had it" (167).

Karega, of course, is in the vanguard of this movement. Of all the individuals in this novel, he comes from the most indigent background, and, like Abdulla, he soon learns that there is no "room for all of us at the meeting point of a victorious struggle" (104). Independence has not led to any change in people's thinking. The Chuis of Kenya remain secure in their lyceums where they continue to convert the youth into "black zombies." Karega's efforts to counter strength with strength had resulted in defeat "with a few broken bones and skulls" (173). He feels, therefore, that his mission is to teach rural students what he was not taught in Siriana:

> He was concerned that the children knew no world outside Ilmorog: they thought of Kenya as a city or a large village somewhere outside Ilmorog. How could he enlarge their consciousness so that they could see themselves, Ilmorog and Kenya as part of a larger whole, a larger territory containing the history of African people and their struggles? (109)

At this stage of his development, then, he finds in teaching a "possible vocation, a daily dialogue with his deepest self" (252). But by the time Munira engineers his dismissal, Karega "had already started to doubt the value of formal education as a tool of a people's total liberation" (252). Nevertheless, he retains the belief that his future as a leader of the people must in some way be involved with teaching. All he is concerned with is "what kind of education it should be" (Killam 108).

At one point in his career, Karega, deeply influenced by Nyakinyua, pins all his hopes for a brighter future on a return to Africa's glorious past. Karega sees in ancient Kenya a social system where land was distributed equitably, and where wealth was the possession of those who had worked to produce it. He soon realizes, however, that a wholesale return to the past would be a reactionary step. There comes a time when Karega "moves beyond Nyakinyua's communal memory of times of grandeur and struggle and confronts this community as a creation of 'the twin cruelties of unprepared-for vulgarities of nature and the uncontrollable actions of men'" (Gikandi 139). Even when he is seemingly enraptured by Nyakinyua's songs of the past, Karega sees its limitations: "It was really very beautiful. But at the end of the evening Karega felt very sad. It was like beholding a relic of beauty that had suddenly surfaced, or like listening to a solitary beautiful tune straying, for a time, from a dying world" (210).

When the past fails to provide adequate guidance, Karega turns to political science and Literature. But here too he is disappointed, It is only when he becomes a trade union agitator that Karega finds a way to lead the people. Even at this juncture, Karega's actions are in keeping with his earlier career. As Killam comments, Karega's

> Mission as a union leader will be as a <u>teacher</u> since he will have to convey the truth to the peasants and workers that there has to be a choice between capitalism and socialism and, more important and more difficult for him, what and why that choice must be. (1980, 109; emphasis added)

There is no guarantee, of course, that Karega will eventually succeed. Although Munira's act of arson has killed Chui and some other exploiters, and the workers in Ilmorog are on the verge of rising up again their masters, the neocolonialists are too entrenched in their power to give up without a considerable struggle. There will be other neocolonialists to replace Chui, just as Joseph replaces Karega and Abdulla. The most he can do is to keep to his task and to show the way towards a millennium when the "kingdom of men and women [would] really begin," and all the peasants would be "joying and loving in creative labour" (344).

Students in *The Castle* are not sufficiently awakened, politically, to agitate for reforms although Trumper, and to some extent, G, are conscious of many drawbacks in the schooling system in Barbados. Karega and others in *Petals of Blood* succeed in driving out Cambridge Fraudsham from Siriana, fired as they are by a growing awareness of their black ethos, but can do little against the neocolonial power of Chui. How then does Arjie combat an abhorrent system in *Funny Boy*? Consider the following comment by Florence Stratton in *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender*:

> Adversarial interaction takes a number of different forms, including straightforward denunciation. Such confrontational tactics are, however, much less prevalent than are strategies of negotiation or intervention. Of these, the one which women writers most frequently employ in their attempt to subvert patriarchal ideology is inversion. (173)

Funny Boy, of course, is not a novel in which a woman writer tries to subvert patriarchal ideology, but the author certainly employs similar strategies in rejecting the kind of neocolonial education imparted to Sri Lankans in The Academy. There are some instances of "straightforward denunciation" when Arjie and Shehan "hold up for ridicule all that was considered sacred by the Queen Victoria Academy" (240). More often, however, Selvadurai uses the strategy of inversion. Arjie had been sent to The Academy because his father did not want him "turning out funny or anything" (210); his father is confident that "The Academy will force ... [Arjie] to become a man" (210). The move turns counter-productive when Arjie shuns the cricket pitch and the rugby grounds, and finds a companion who is, in fact, a homosexual. Arjie's own latent homosexual tendencies that had emerged during his childhood game of "Bride Bride," are confirmed in school. He was sent to the Academy to become "a man," but he is ironically transformed into a "funny boy."

Selvadurai, more than Lamming and Ngugi, is interested in the many ways that the colonial mentality continues to be inscribed in the minds of postcolonial students. His extensive use of Henry Newbolt's compositions "The Best School of All" and "Vitae Lampada" is particularly effective in this regard. Poems like these and others like "Casabianca" and "The Charge of the Light Brigade" were taught to generations of colonial students to inculcate British values. The pieces referred to in *Funny Boy* are ironic for two reasons; first, they espouse values that are alien to Sri Lanka. One of the verses in "Vitae Lampada" draws a parallel between the predicament faced by "the last man in" and a crisis in an outpost of the Empire where soldiers have to continue the battle (against "natives," presumably,) although their "captain is dead." By valorizing this poem, and by making students internalize its contents, Black Tie and others force students to identify with the soldiers and not with the "natives." Then again, the schools fail to uphold the values expressed in these verses, despite the prominence given to them. Consider Arjie's ruminations on "Vitae Lampada" and the spirit in which cricket is actually played at The Academy:

> It said that through playing cricket one learned to be honest and brave and patriotic. This was not true at the Victoria Academy. Cricket, here, consisted on trying to make it on the first-eleven team by any means, often by cheating or by fawning over the cricket master. (233)

All the students in the novels under review have been "... open ... to an alienating cultural indoctrination that is out of step with the historical moment" (Spivak 277). But Arjie is one of those rare persons who becomes a "resisting reader" as an adolescent. He is able to achieve these insights by placing himself in the margins of society. This distancing not only allows him to see the hypocrisy inherent in the school, and the anachronistic nature of its values, but it also creates in him a deep feeling of injustice at the manner in which he, Shehan, and others of their ilk have been treated by the school, and by the entire patriarchal world. In such a world, "[r]ight and wrong, fair and unfair had nothing to do with how things really were" (273). Arjie enunciates:

> How was it that some people got to decide what was correct or not, just or unjust? It has to do with who was in charge; everything had to do with who held power and who didn't. If you were powerful like Black Tie or my father you got to decide what was right or wrong. If you were like Shehan or me you had no

> choice but to follow what they said. But did we always have to obey? Was it not possible for people like Shehan and me to be powerful too? I thought about this, but no answer presented itself to me. (274)

Although Arjie does not realise it at the time, an opportunity for empowerment offers itself very soon. This study has already shown that G cannot fully comprehend the workings of the educational system in Barbados because he is emphatically a colonial. Action must necessarily be deferred until he returns "educated," *a la* Trumper. Karega and his colleagues bring sufficient pressure to bear on Fraudsham to hasten his departure, yet their combined strength is insufficient to remove the neocolonial educator, Chui. Arjie becomes aware of Black Tie's vulnerable position after his conversations with Shehan and Sunderalingam, but he employs subtlety whereas Karega and others use the more traditional forms of resistance. Karega and his peers can act in this fashion because they are guaranteed the support of all the students; Arjie, who is an "outsider" at the Victoria Academy, has no such power base. What he does under the circumstances is to pretend that he belongs to the centre; that he recognizes, respects, and supports Black Tie's cause. Arjie engineers matters in such a way that the embattled principal is dependent on him for his survival--rather like the Empire relying on the colonies for support in the great wars. Once this objective has been achieved, Arjie has but to wait for the correct moment to strike a blow against this offensive system.

The strategy Argie uses to achieve this end is both apt and effective. He realises that the ideology expressed in "The Best School of All" and "Vitae Lampada" is not only irrelevant to Sri Lankans living in the last quarter of the twentieth century but also inchoate. Then again, he senses, though he is not able to fully understand, the colonial/neocolonial impulses behind formal recitations which Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin articulate thus:

> Texts, as a number of cultures recognise, actually enter the body, and imperial education systems interpellated a colonialist subjectivity not just through syllabus content, or the establishment of libraries within which the colonial "could absorb the lesson of the master," but through internalizing the English text, and reproducing it before audiences of fellow colonials. Recitation of literary texts thus becomes a ritual act of obedience, often performed by a child before an audience of admiring adults, who, in reciting that English tongue, speaks as if s/he were the imperial

> speaker/master rather than the subjectified colonial so often represented in English poetry and prose. (426)

Arjie rejects this "ritual act of obedience" by giving a garbled recitation of the poems in the presence of the old boy whose support Black Tie needs so desperately; in the process, he not only succeeds in making Black Tie leave the hall "tired and defeated" (283), but by deliberately distorting the lines he reveals, symbolically, that the principles governing the school are nonsensical indeed.

It would be simplistic to make too many generalizations about education in the colonies and the former colonies by examining just three novels. That Lamming's, Ngugi's, and Selvadurai's texts present just some approaches to the issue and do not constitute a definitive paradigm for colonial education is revealed by comparing and contrasting their novels with a novel like Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy* which subverts received forms of education in a more devastating way, and foregrounds substantial alternatives. What a focussed consideration of these three novels confirms, however, is that colonial forms of schooling will remain even in the 21st century. Despite all efforts to dismantle this colonial structure, or at least to remodel it, very little has, in fact, been achieved. The birch that is administered so mercilessly in Groddeck's is wielded equally violently in the "postcolonial" world of the Victoria Academy, as Head teachers and principals vent their frustrations on students on the pretext of instilling discipline, values, and knowledge. The methods of instruction, too, show little change. Students are not encouraged to learn for themselves. They are either circumscribed by the canon of English Literature *(Petals of Blood)*, forced to commit to memory nonsensical lines like "ab ab catch a crab" (Lamming 1973, 36), which according to Pousse are "a parody of learning" (55), or asked to recite poems that perpetuate and revitalize the values of the former masters (*Funny Boy*). The forty year period has seen acculturation being replaced by some forms of resistance, of course. The "passivity" of the colonial, Barbadian schoolboy is followed by the militancy in Kenyan schools, and the more subtle forms of protest in contemporary Sri Lanka. Caliban has learned to speak/write back to a centre that is now occupied by the "white washed" elite. Still, efforts to decolonise the educational establishment have just begun; consequently, it will be many moons yet before Caliban could stop cursing Prospero and declare unreservedly that he is an "autonomous indigene."

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S.W. PERERA

SCIENCE FICTION: WHY ARE THESE POSSIBLE WORLDS WITH US?[1]

1. Stories

Story-telling would have been a pastime of man almost from the time that he could speak. In all cultures, folk tales, fairy tales, stories of gods, biographical sketches, were treasured, to which, for example, the *Pancatantra, Jataka stories, Aesop's Fables* or *Arabian Nights* testify. History itself, for instance the *Mahavamsa*, could be looked upon as a story of individuals, of countries, of civilizations.

Most of the ancient stories are both entertaining and educative. A story taught a moral. Sometimes the stories were narrated; or written or re-written in verse-like our *kavi-kola* or our poetry books like *Kavyasekharaya* or *Guttila Kavya*; or again the story was written in the form of a play, like Shakespeare's dramas; but more often these appeared as prose. In all these forms, some of the stories were part of the serious-or mainstream-literature.

2. The Novel

Though all stories, except perhaps faithful biographical and historical sketches, would have had a considerable imaginative, creative or fictitious element, the present day form of writing prose fiction -- the novel and the short story -- is of comparatively recent origin. Although the earliest prose fiction is traced back to the Japanese tales of *Genji*, written a millennium ago, the novel developed as a major form of literature in the West. The first novels date back to the beginnings of the seventeenth century and indeed this coincides with the rise of science. Italy was the cradle of the Renaissance as well as the Scientific Revolution, and the name novel, which indicates that it was something new, is itself traced back to the Italian term *novella*. Post-Renaissance Europe, in as much as it gave rise to science, gave rise to the novel, and this, I believe, is due to the freedom and the vision of conquest that the Renaissance brought about, well depicted by the famous Florentine Sculpture David of Michelangelo, together with the wide scope opened up for imagination and narration by the great explorations and sea-voyages. The Scientific Revolution re-oriented the

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mind liberated by the Renaissance. The flat Earth had become spherical and the Copernican Revolution had sent it firmly to the orbit. Man was humbled but made more curious. The Industrial Revolution transformed human material life. By the nineteenth century a new understanding of biological and socio-political life was emerging. The Darwins (Erasmus and Charles) brought Natural History and Evolution into the picture. Malthus had written his Essay on the Principle of Population. And English liberalism had dawned.

Daniel Defoe's (1660-1731) *Robinson Crusoe* could be considered the progenitor of novels in England and Cervantes' (1547 - 1616) *Don Quixote* the beginning of the Spanish novel. Voltaire's *Candide*, written in 1759, though not the first work of French fiction, reflects its times and trends and influenced the movement for revolution in France. James Fenimore Cooper's (1789 - 1851) *The Last of the Mohicans* was an early, though not the first, North American novel. All these are based on voyages, travel, exploration and conquest.

The printing press which came to Europe from China and was further improved in fifteenth century Europe helped the spread of this new form of literature. It blossomed in Europe, and led to the great Russian literary creations like *War and Peace* of Tolstoy (1828 - 1920) and *The Brothers Karamazov* of Dostoyevsky (1821 - 1881).

3. Science Fiction - The Beginnings

If the beginning of the European novel is less than four centuries old, science fiction (SF for short) itself is just over a hundred years old. For although there are a few SF fans who would claim that stories of "lost continents" like Plato's Utopia *The Republic* to Swift's political satire *Gullivers Travels* are SF these are at best "Proto - SF". Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* (1818) is sometimes mentioned as a piece of early science fiction and so are some short stories of American writer Edgar Allan Poe. But the beginnings of SF are more aptly traced to the work of the French writer Jules Verne (1828 - 1905) and the English writer H.G. Wells (1866 - 1946). Verne's books *Five Weeks in a Balloon, A Trip from the Earth to the Moon* came in the 1860s and *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* and *Around the World in Eighty Days* appeared in the 1870s. Wells' *Time Machine* and *The War of the Worlds* came out in the 1890s. Jack London who wrote *Before Adam* (1906) and the *Iron Heel* (1907) is considered the first American science - fiction writer.

4. What Is Science Fiction?

Science fiction has been defined in various ways by its writers and commentators. SF has been associated with fantasy and it has also been called speculative fiction.

Some maintain that good science fiction is grounded in the concepts of the natural sciences and the technologies that have utilized these concepts. But, as we shall see, the concepts need not be restricted to the natural sciences.

Kingsley Amis, a practitioner of the art, defines SF as "that class of prose narrative treating of a situation that could not arise in the world we know, but which is hypothesised on the basis of some innovation in science and technology, or pseudo-science or pseudo-technology."[2]

The following give some other accounts of the nature and scope of science fiction.

"Imaginary voyages, remarkable inventions, predictions and social satire-science fiction speculates; it synthesizes an array of possible futures towards which man and his social structure may be directed".[3]

"Science fiction is that branch of literature which is concerned with the impact of scientific advance on human beings."[4]

Judith Merril, who seems to equate science fiction with what she calls speculative fiction, says that speculative fiction consists of those "stories whose objective is to explore, to discover, to learn by means of projection, extrapolation, the nature of the universe, of man, of reality".

She goes on to say that speculative fiction is that "mode which makes use of the traditional "scientific method" (observation, hypotheses, experimentation) to examine some postulated approximation of reality, by introducing a given set of changes-imaginary or inventive-into the common background of 'known facts', creating an environment in which the responses

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2 Kingsley Amis, in *New Maps of Hell,* New York: Arno, 1974, p. 18.

3 Martin Harry Greenberg and Patricia S. Warrick, (ed.), *Political Science Fiction,* Prentice-Hall 1974, (Hereafter, PSF).

4 Issac Asimov, in *Otherworlds to Conquer* (ed.), Joseph D. Olender and Martin Harry Greenberg. New York, Taplinger Publishing Co., (1977), (Hereafter, *Asimov*) p. 14.

and perceptions of the characters will reveal something about the inventions, the characters or both."[5]

Science fiction today has ramifications such as social science fiction, political science fiction and so on. SF extrapolates scientific concepts and gadgets, but these are not only those of the natural sciences. For example, George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four* which easily falls under classic political science fiction, is hardly based on technological innovations. Then again, if we use Amis's definition, the SF writer could use pseudo-science.

Let us imagine a situation where a person remembers his last birth. If he writes or narrates this story, its loves and strife (we get these stories all the time, and the study of rebirth is done by scientists like Ian Stevenson, but is it a pseudo-science?), will that be science fiction?

If H.G. Wells could travel forward to 800000 A.D. in his Time Machine (which was only a mental construction) why cannot another travel back in his mind a hundred years, and why is the latter account not science fiction? Because, one would say, it is neither a construction, nor a fiction, for it is given to and by the narrator as reality, whereas H.G. Wells well knew, and the readers know, that the Time Machine and the world it discovered was a construction. But suppose I write the story of my past birth-though I do not remember it. I construct it. I imagine myself going to my last birth not with a time machine but by introspection i.e., by my mind or memory reaching there. Going by my present misfortunes I trace my *kamma* back and reconstruct my past life, using the concept of re-birth (and constructed introspection) which is, say, a pseudo scientific concept. Will my story be science fiction?

This is not a problem which can or should be overcome by refining Amis's definition by dropping the use of the pseudo-science part of it. For what is science or pseudo-science at any period in time is relative to that period and science fiction itself, as it is today, is a lot of pseudo-science by present day conceptions and possibilities.

Another question of interest is whether we can write science fiction about the present. The answer seems to be 'yes' and 'no'. Many are familiar with the short story in G.B. Senanayake's collection *Paliganeema* where a person after mistakenly drinking a drug which leads to hallucination is made to see a person following him to kill him. He tries to escape by various ways, but it is futile. He runs for his life but the killer follows him to his home, until he crashes down and awakens to the actual situation. This could be a piece of

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5 Judith Merril, "What Do You Mean: Science? Fiction?" in *SF: The Other Side of Realism* (ed.) Thomas Clarenson, Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, (1971), p. 60.

science fiction, and there are hundreds of similar stories in literature. The setting of this story, and many stories like this, is the present. But why is this science fiction? Because there was no drug, generally known, which could have produced such a hallucination when the story appeared. So it was a projection. Part of it, the drug, is not there in the present.

Before I take up the definition of speculative fiction as science fiction, I wish to ask, is the story of Ravana travelling in his air-borne machine *Dandumonera* a piece of science fiction? Or even the story of Mahausada's construction of a tunnel as well as lighting the whole tunnel with one switch, as it is found in the *Ummagga Jatakaya?* The immediate response would be 'no'. It is pure imagination, pure fantasy. Not an extrapolation of science. This would at best be proto - SF. But suppose Roger Bacon (1215 - 1292) who was an early scientist before the birth of modern science proper and who predicted the construction of airplanes, had written a story using the idea, would it have been the first of science fiction? Where does the thin line lie?

Let us now take the definition of speculative fiction given above. It does not directly refer to the use of science and technology. It refers to the use of scientific method and the 'known facts' in the construction of speculative fiction.

Speculative here seems to be taken in the sense of 'pursue an inquiry ... form theory or conjectural opinion'[6]. A problem that one could have with the term speculative fiction is that not only science fiction but other stories like historical novels could be speculative in the same sense. This definition also refers only to a background of known facts as the take off point or the point of reference. Such a general contention of reference allows us to bring for example, historical novels under speculative fiction. Moreover, 'known facts' is a very vague term and people may disagree as to what the known facts are. Known facts in the Aristotelian Universe are quite different from the facts of our world. Even today, particularly in the social sciences, there will be disagreement over the question as to what facts are known.

The idea that "scientific method" (observation, hypothesis, experiment) is used in the construction of speculative fiction is interesting, but the analogy seems literally inaccurate. In the first place, the experiments here are thought experiments, also called Gedanken experiments. No doubt such thought experiments helped the progress of science; for instance, Einstein's imagining that if he raced at the velocity of light with a ray of light he would perceive the ray only as an electromagentic wave in oscillation was instrumental in the

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6 Cf. *Concise Oxford Dictionary.*

conception of the Special Theory of Relativity[7]. But mental experiments are not the key experiments in the traditional scientific method. The observations in the given definition are the facts which are already known, the hypothesis is the postulated approximation to reality, but the 'changes and responses' to them remain just mental constructions, even if they turn out to be realizable someday. So the use of traditional 'scientific method' in the construction of speculative fiction is a far cry from reality.

Science fiction usually provides settings that are different from our world of everyday experience. For example, we are taken into the future or the past, a different world like another planet or we are made to encounter a different type of being, e.g., Martians. Arthur C. Clarke in his Kalinga Award speech says that the science fiction writer, "by mapping out possible futures as well as good many impossible ones...encourages his readers flexibility of mind, readiness to accept and even welcome change-in one word, adaptability" (Arthur C. Clarke, *Voices from the Sky*, New York, Harper, 1965, p. 164). SF writers adopt the method of extrapolation i.e., taking up current trends and developments and projecting them forward in time and Gedanken experiment (thought experiment) in their method, as we already noted.

It is the ideas and situations and not characters, which gain dominance in SF. The ideas are mostly drawn using the hard sciences as base but today psychological, anthropological or socio-political ideas are also sources.

As literature, science fiction uses these ideas and constructions to deal with the human condition-its fears, and hopes, and predicaments. The artefacts, locations and devices in SF in this sense are symbols, metaphors or allegories. Science fiction is, in a sense, the mythology of the age of Science.

5. Science Fiction: Themes and Development

There are different classifications of science fiction. One classification, based on content, is into imaginary voyages, remarkable inventions, future predictions and social satire. Some works fall into more than one of these categories. Another classification could be into natural science fiction, social science fiction, political science fiction and so on.

Originally, science fiction was close to mainstream fiction: Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days* had elements of exploration, romance and drama which could have allowed it to pass even as a mainstream novel. H.G.

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7 Albert Einstein, "Autobiographical Notes" in *Albert Einstein: Philosopher Scientist.* (ed.) P.A. Schilpp, Illinois: The Library of Living Philosophers, 1949, p. 53.

Wells's *Time Machine* was more radical, mostly due to his conception of time travel and perhaps his account of the society in the distant future, "Eight hundred and Two Thousand Seven Hundred and one A.D. for that was the date the little dials of my machine recorded."[8] And what he sees is a communistic humanity, degenerated due to the non utility of their faculties, due in turn to the lack of necessity. But Wells brings in a little romance, unfulfilling though it is, with a little female creature of this society, Weena. Thus adventure, romance and social satire are wound together in his novel.

Wells wrote not only science fiction but other novels like *Kipps* as well, as he was a mainstream novelist. Science fiction of this early period, that is, until about the 1930s, was less technical and the language used was not very different from that of mainstream fiction. Usually, the central characters in the stories were made to be slightly unusual, a little "loony" or a bit out of the ordinary. And this gives a 'believe it or not' touch to the story. Thus we find others saying of the Time Traveller:

> I think that at that time none of us quite believed in the Time Machine. The fact is, the Time Traveller was one of those men who are too clever to be believed: you never felt that you saw all round him.[9]

In Wells' novel *Star Begotten* the main character, although a historian, is treated as loony. He goes on believing that the Martians are somehow influencing the affairs on Earth: they are already here at work, and he wonders whether their first child that his wife is bearing at the moment is going to be a product of some Martian influence. C.S. Lewis, much later than Wells but another representative of this era, wrote novels like *Out of the Silent Planet*, and *Perelandra*. In the former, a physicist who wants to conquer the other planets and a business minded man who wants to plunder the gold that is abundant on a planet called Malacandra which eventually turns of to be Mars - abduct a philologist and take him with them.

In Malacandra they are found to be wanting in their morals, particularly the physicist and the businessman, and are sent back to Earth by the spiritual leader of Malacandra who seems to be served by some sort of angels called eldila. Even here, all three who went to Malacandra are portrayed as slightly eccentric. The last author from this period whom I want to mention is Aldous Huxley who wrote *Brave New World,* in 1932. In this he created a new utopia of

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8 H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine*. London: Ernest Benn, 1927 (1966 Edition), p. 33.

9 op.cit., p. 17.

a technologically conditioned society where everyone was happy because one has been conditioned to want only what she/he is supposed to want. In this utopia genetic engineering produced people of different levels of intelligence. And each happily filled her/his role in the society. A little soma drug (liquor) and a little sex tempered any minor irritations left over in a person. But the question that Huxley poses is - what price happiness if man has to buy it sacrificing his freedom to make choices? Huxley's *Island* published in 1962, is "another utopian spoof". The scene is Pala, an island in South East Asia, "dedicated to contemplative life." It presents, like Plato did in *The Republic*, "a view of what society is not but might be."

In the four authors that we considered from this early period of science fiction, Verne's preoccupation is with voyages and inventions, Wells' concern is with prediction and social comment, C.S. Lewis' interest was primarily theological and Huxley focussed on social and moral criticism. Thus, Wells, Lewis and Huxley could be considered to have written social science fiction. They are not much differentiable from the mainstream fiction in style as Verne, Wells and Huxley could very well be considered mainstream writers.

We now enter the middle period in science fiction-the period which some have named the period of High Science Fiction. It runs from the 1940s to the early 1960s. Science Fiction now becomes very "technical", if one is inclined to call it so. There is an experimental approach to writing and a faith in scientific progress. The readers of this fiction were not literary-wise inspired. On the other hand they were not all familiar with the concepts or jargon and the technical gadgets, actual or imaginary, which these novels mentioned. So we find the authors writing in "plain" language, used for technical writing. In an attempt to be clear, they try to describe-rather explain-the gadgets and their workings most of the time. They use short sentences. By this time computers, robots, artificial intelligence, satellites and space travel had entered science fiction in a big way. Two of the giants of this period are Arthur C. Clarke and Isaac Asimov. Let me quote a passage from Clarke's *The Fountains of Paradise* to illustrate this style and language.

> "Range three zero. Turbulence getting worse. Drifting badly to the left. Impossible to calculate correction. Movements too erratic."
>
> "I've got it" Morgan cried. "It's through the clouds!"
>
> "Range two five. Not enough propellent to get back on course. Estimate we'll miss by three kilometers."
>
> "It does not matter." shouted Morgan. "Crash where you can!"
>
> "Will do soonest. Range two zero. Wind force increasing. Losing stabilization. Payload starting to spin."

"Release the brake. Let the wire run out!"

"Dispenser malfunction. Payload spin now five revs. per second. Wire probably entangled. Tension one eight zero percent. One nine zero. Two zero zero..."[10]

Here is Morgan, the engineer hero of the story, trying to exhibit the strength of a wire and the possible usage of its material in service of a tower to take space passengers to stations high above Earth. I shall come back to this story again in a later section.

The themes during this period are complex. Voyages, space exploration, social criticism, prediction as well as invention are worked into the stories. The two authors I mentioned wrote a large number of space stories, but Asimov used them for social criticism, whereas Clarke was more of a mystic. The readership they catered to were, on the one hand, high school children who imagined they themseleves would be spacemen one day. The mature audiences needed a deeper, philosophical, psychological, sociological treatment of the themes. This generation of writers, to meet this demand, used physical concepts and technological creations coupling them with a simple language with metaphorical and symbolic expressions. A few titles from these two writers would indicate their themes.

Clarke: *Across the Sea of Stars, At the End of the Orbit, Cosmic Casanova, Curse, Last Command, Nine Billion Names of God, Time's Arrow, 2001: The Space Odyssey.*

Asimov: *By Jupiter, Currents of Space, Darwinian Pool Room, Last Question, Night-fall, I robot, Thiotimoline and the Space Age, Gods Themselves.*[11]

Asimov, probably in his attempt to solve the problem of machine versus man, (and perhaps man vs. man using robot) came out with his Three Laws of Robotics, which echoes Newton's Three Laws of Motion.

1. A robot may not injure a human being, or through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.

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10 Arthur C. Clarke, *The Fountains of Paradise*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1978. p. 160.

11 *Science Fiction Story Index 1950-1979*, Chicago, American Library Association, 1981, pp. 309 - 316 and 362 - 369.

2. A robot must obey orders given it by human beings except where such orders will conflict with the First Law.

3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.[12]

Asimov handed over the construction of all his robots to the U.S. Robot and Mechanical Corporation. Robot colonies were used to run the systems in the Earth colonies in outer space.

The *third period* in science fiction dates from the early sixties. A new set of writers with a more literary bent and less interest in science enter the scene This is the New Wave. Their writing is more in the tradition of literature and poetry. I shall quote from an award winning piece *"Repent Harlequin" Said the Ticktockman*, by Harlan Ellison, a writer and editor closely identified with the New Wave.

> Jelly beans! Millions and billions of purples and yellows and greens and liquorice and grape and raspberry and mint and round and smooth and crunchy outside and soft mealy inside and sugary and bouncing jouncing tumbling clittering clattering skittering fell on the heads and shoulders and hard-hats and carapaces of the Timkin workers.[13]

Asimov indicates the approach of the New Wave, as well as the attitude to it of the earlier group to which he belongs, when he says that New Wave writers "have a stronger literary background and are more interested in stylistic experimentation and in the new freedom with which sex and inner consciousness may be explored" while at the same time they are "not as science oriented as the writers of a generation ago."[14] Two of the outstanding American SF writers of this period are Samuel Delany and Ursula K. Le Guin.

Although the subject matter of SF becomes increasingly varied, its limitations are hinted at by the veteran British SF writer Brian Aldiss, who updated his history of science fiction, *The Billion year Spree*, sometime back.

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12 *Asimov*. p. 18.

13 Harlan Ellison, *"'Repent Harlequin,' said the Ticktockman"* reproduced in *PSF*. p. 236 ff.

14 Isaac Asimov, in *Nebula* No. 8. p. XVI. quoted in *Asimov*. p. 70.

Aldiss says, "I'll tell you what they are about, mainly and in two words: Fantasy and America."

Aldiss laments the swing from science-oriented works towards stories of galactic empires. "The Galactic Empire is in for a long run, fuelled by American dreams of glory."

"I want SF to be about everything, to include everything. Its true range has greatly extended during the period I have been writing, but I am impatient for more."[15]

6. Science Fiction: The Contemporary Social Setting

We saw that the novel originated with the stories of explorers and travellers e.g., *Robinson Crusoe* and *Don Quixote*. Similarly, when the American West was being explored or conquered, westerns or stories about the American West caught the imagination of the writer and the market. Both these gave a lot of material; adventure, treasures, war, conquest, love, heroism which in blend caught the readership.

Science itself is an exploration, of the inner working of natural phenomena. With the beginnings of actual space travel has dawned the possibilities of exploration in a sense similar though more daunting than post-Renaissance sea voyages or the conquest of the American wild West. Science fiction bases itself on both these senses of exploration and in recent times space travel, robots and space-colonies of man have dominated its themes.

Thus in one way SF is a natural outcome, *in contemporary terms,* of man's interest in adventure, exploration, conquest and imagination about the unknown and the remote, the near mystical.

Looked at from another angle, SF depicts the life style of the times, as most literature did and does. We (or science) passed the mechanical age and entered the electro-magnetic age by the turn of the century. In the developed countries the computer has entered the primary class room and the television has become the baby-sitter in America. Jet travel, although its mechanics could be primitive compared to that of space-travel, is so commonplace today that almost everybody in the developed countries experience it early in their lives. The jet-plane and the motor car run American life. Even the poorer and less educated in the underdeveloped countries experience jet travel today, for example, plane loads of house-maids and other workers who travel from our countries to the Middle-East and back.

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15 *Publishers Weekly*, May 23, 1986 (Hereafter, *PW*). p. 43.

Playing electronic games is an obsession of the young in the West today. Pressing the button for almost anything -- for light, telephone, television, transport, drink and food -- is the commonest thing in today's world. Days of quick or long and troublesome mental calculations are gone; every sales girl uses a calculator. (And, incidentally, we have the New Maths and today less and less people learn to calculate mentally.) Communication through satellites, genetic engineering and artificial intelligence are common knowledge. Life has become mechanical, it has become electro-magnetic. Man is becoming a bit robot like.

Man is becoming machine-like in another sense. With exploration, colonization, industrialization, Western man spread himself over the globe. These changes, after the Renaissance and the rise of science, led to individualism; consequently family ties, even marriage as an institution - I mean as a life long partnership - is under threat, partly due to the pressures of life, partly due to the outlook on life. The new world-view is based on science, industry, technology, and commerce. Copernicus floated the Earth and man today is in a Cartesian whirlpool which carries him from job to job, from partner to partner (or no partner) and from place to place across the continents, across the oceans, and will it be, if science fiction turns out to be reality, across space to satellite space colonies and the planets?

These strains and experiences are not completely confined to the West. The South Asians, for example, have their own colonies in London, Toronto, New York, Los Angeles, and of course, Australia. Their children join the children of the whites and the blacks in front of the computer in the primary class, for electronic games. Some of the gadgets they use have been produced in high-pressured Japan or were simulated in Taiwan, Hong Kong or Singapore. Those who are unable to go to the West, go to the Middle-East, South-East or Far East leaving their families behind.

The point is, the old values and life styles are dying fast in the entire world. New life styles are emerging, but what are the new values-values in the moral sense? Are we becoming cogs, automata, on robots? Are we already at the mercy of the computer? Science is said to be value-neutral. It would probably be called emotion free as well. Is science (and technology, industry and commerce) moving us towards a land of less emotions, little ethics and greater self-gratification? Globalization is the term and with it the uprooted individuals are so far in what Ken Wilbers called flatland or the collapsed Kosmos. (*A Brief History of Everything*, Shambala, 1996, pp. 267 ff.)

7. Science Fiction: Culture, Claims and Deformities

C.P. Snow, in *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* lamented over the communication gap or the intellectual rift between the men of science

and the men who practised literary and other non-scientific disciplines.[16] Some writers on science fiction seem to feel that science fiction somehow could bridge this chasm.[17]

Snow might have been correct about the communication gap between the two groups of intellectuals, but there is a much more significant problem which we must take up here. Intellectuals are a small minority and as Jacques Barzun points out "... When added together, the two "cultures" leave out ninety-nine - hundredths of the population."[18] (and he rightly asks) "Does this remnant form a third culture, neither scientific nor humanistic"?[19]

It is important to discuss this broader issue concerning the whole population. Barzun goes on to argue that there are no two cultures, but only one. "The truth is that all these men, together with those for whom the issue does not even begin to exist, belong to one culture, the scientific culture of the Western World in the twentieth century."[20]

Barzun is speaking about the Western society but the argument in Section 6 above has been that this culture or world-view or life which is dependent on science and technology has spread all over the world -- rich and poor, capitalist and communist, black, white, yellow and brown. Another statement of Barzun links up nicely with the position that was outlined in Section 6.

> During the past thirty years the articulate have increasingly cried out against the tyranny of scientific thought, the oppression of machinery, the hegemony of things, the dehumanization brought about by way of number and quantity[21]

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16 C.P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution,* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1959.

17 See, for example, *PSF* p. 1, and *Asimov*, p. 70.

18 Jacques Barzun, *Science: The Glorious Entertainment,* London: Secker & Warburg, (1964). (Hereafter, Barzun). p. 11.

19 loc.cit.

20 op.cit., p. 12.

21 op.cit., p.1.

Barzun wrote in 1964 and thirty six years later, today, we see that the conquest by Techne has moved at an accelerated speed. So, could one look at science fiction (and note here the rapid growth of science fiction, star war television, etc. during the last three or four decades) as another instrument of the Techne-in its non-retardable conquest? Science fiction then becomes a symbol of complete take over - of even creative literature - by science!

Science fiction writers and their commentators would not see the situation just on such a basis. The emergence of science fiction, as they see it, is mainly due to the failure of the earlier forms of literature. Let us look at one such view.

Mathew Arnold suggested in the nineteenth century in his *Science and Literature* that as science more and more replaced religion as man's intellectual concern literature promised to be the most workable mode to interpret man's universe for him and to provide a guide for making meaningful choices.

But the mainstream literature today-and particularly fiction has not fulfilled that promise. The contemporary novel is not a dynamic force for the young, for several reasons. First, it presents an anti-hero, alienated, unable to cope, without ability to act. Second, the world it creates seems almost devoid of science and technology-this at a time when science and technology are vastly altering the real world. Finally, modern fiction ignores the future that man must make his final concern ...

Clearly a new literary form is necessary -- as the new discipline of futurology points out, we must study and choose wisely between the alternatives that technology can make available in the future if man is to survive.

Science fiction is that new literary form. (It is) a child born of the marriage of the sciences and the humanities. As Alvin Toffler states so forcefully in *Future Shock*, the present is a time of accelerating changes; something is happening. When Estragon in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* said, "nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful"; he was not in touch with the forefront of scientific thinking. Science fiction conveys this rapid change, gives it a sense of adventure, and offers an array of possible futures towards which man and his social structure may be directed."[22]

Now this is a massive claim but there are even larger ones made for science fiction. Let us now ask two questions:

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22 *PSF*, p.2.

(i) Is science fiction a means of integrating the two cultures spoken of by Snow, taken in the broad sense, that is, to encompass the whole population?

(ii) Is science fiction performing the role that Mathew Arnold envisaged for literature in the era of science?

In answer to (i), one can say that it is true that science fiction links the man conversant with science with literary craft. Most science fiction writers are people with some scientific training (Snow himself was a physicist. He wrote novels, his fiction, though, is no SF. His novel *The Search* dealt with scientists involved in research, but that by itself would not make it science fiction). Thus, for example, Asimov holds a Ph.D in biochemistry and was a teacher in a medical faculty, a job which he gave up to do full-time writing. Arthur C. Clarke's scientific interests are well known. Wells studied science, even worked for a doctorate in his seventies, and one of his cherished ambitions was to be elected a Fellow of the Royal Society (which, unfortunately, was not fulfilled).[23] Gregory Benford, another contemporary SF writer, teaches and researches in Astrophysics at the University of California. Others, like Jack Williamson, who is a Professor of English, would have, probably on their own, mastered some science.

The majority of those who read science fiction stories in the West are young people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five. They have had some University or High School level education.[24] So the readership probably does have some knowledge of science and interest in reading adventure, if not literature.

Science fiction thus might have a role in bringing the two cultures together. But the more plausible view seems to be that science fiction is catering to the single culture (*a la* Barzun) that is spreading, giving it popular doses of that culture and in the process, popularizing that culture.

In answer to (ii), most people with any sophistication would agree that science fiction, as it is, does not perform the role that Mathew Arnold wanted literature to take up. Obviously the role is about a choice, an ethical or spiritual choice. That it was such a choice that he meant is clear by his reference to the need for a substitute for religion. What he meant, I believe, was something more akin to the choice that Existentialists try to indicate in their literature.

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23 C.P. Snow, *Variety of Men*, Harmondsworth, Penguin: 1969 (Hereafter, Snow) pp. 73-74.

24 *PW*, p.63.

The science-fiction writers' position is that they create possible alternative worlds--so that the readers would be kept in readiness to choose between them, when occasion demands men to choose. One of their main claims is that change is taking place and that science fiction makes man ready to accept change.

Science fiction makes the reader more flexible or at any rate it goes well with the young whose minds are more flexible. But there could be concern that most SF writers who believe in science also believe that science brings progress or that the march of science cannot or should not be retarded and this may not facilitate meeting the required ends. Science fiction writers are creating a mythology, the mythology of science, for our younger generation, the generation that wants to be spacemen at least in their thinking. Widening one's horizons literally, to see the depth of space is good contemplation. It makes one humble, realizing its immensity and one's insignificance. It makes one forget about all one's differences on Earth, Caste, Creed, Nation, Colour, Sinhala, Tamil, Zulu indicating the pettiness of it all. By depicting Earth as one "power" in the inter-planetary colonialism, people on Earth could be made to feel united, to realize that they should get together and share resources. Meditating on Space, making one's mind as free and as all encompassing as space, for example, is one of the higher states (*dhyana*) that one could attain in Buddhism. It is called *akasannayatana*. All this and much more could be claimed for space-oriented science fiction themes. Science fiction has brought about the conflict between man and his creation, the machine, in the sharpest possible way, as the challenge of the robot to man at his highest level. Moreover, writers like Asimov have used SF to criticise racial discrimination and other social evils. All the same I find something to be missing in most SF. It is flat, and indeed as even the term 'star wars' could indicate, destructive most of the time.

The choice that Matthew Arnold would have meant, when he wrote *Science and Literature*, as far as I can see, is the choice between the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly, the spiritual and the non-spiritual. Much of the science fiction that has been written does not prepare man to choose between these. But serious literature perhaps should, and that is what Arnold would have had in mind. Perhaps the mainstream literature has failed to achieve this objective. But science fiction does not seem to have done better in this respect either.

One problem I see is the arrogance of science as manifested in the science fiction writer. Take, for example, *Evidence*, quite an entertaining story, almost a thriller, written by Asimov. Two men, Quinn and Byerley come forward as candidates for Mayorship of a city. Quinn, finding Byerley unbeatable, "cooks up" his last card-that Byerley is a robot, and not a man. In the battle of wits and strategies that follows the proof or disproof of this becomes almost impossible, but finally, Byerley "Proves" that he is a man by

hitting another man: (because Asimov's three Laws of Robotics do not allow a robot to hurt a man). Byerley becomes Mayor. Dr. Susan Calvin, robot psychologist in the story, meets Byerley one night and in the discussion with him says,

> "I mean there is one time when a robot may strike a human being without breaking the First Law. Just one time."
>
> "And when is that?"
>
> "Dr. Calvin was at the door." She said quietly,"When the human to be struck is merely another robot". She smiled broadly,her thin face glowing. "Good-bye Mr. Byerley. I hope to vote for you five years from now-for co-ordinator". Byerley eventually becomes Regional Co-ordinator and later World Co-ordinator. He dies and is atomised. So no evidence is left over.[25]

There might be other morals (e.g., about non-discrimintion even between men and robots) in this story, but I am interested in a particular issue. What if Byerley was a robot! I think that the story, by suggestion, though not directly, even says that he was. Susan Calvin more or less knew it. She (a woman!) voted for him. The robot became the leader of the world.

Thus robots are better than men. Machines are the heroes. So be like machines. Is this the choice we are given? The choice we are trained for by science fiction?

Consider again, Arthur C. Clarke's *Fountains of Paradise*, from which I quoted a passage earlier on. It is worth our attention not only because of its setting in Taprobane or Sri Lanka but also because of the balanced composition, the interesting world that it creates, and the semi-mystical and complex message that it carries, linking Kalidasa (Kashyapa of Sigiriya) with the Tower to heaven. But even in this beautiful story, who or what are the main characters and situations? A super engineer, Morgan. A super ambassador in retirement, Rajasinghe. A super journalist, Maxine Duval. A Super corporation: Terran Construction Corporation. A super job on which Morgan is hooked: to construct a tower to transport passengers to outer space to save expenses on take off of space-craft from Earth. The site for construction: Sri Kanda or Adam's Peak, imaginarily shifted on to the Equator. The Mahanayake of Sri Kanda and Yakkagala (Sigiriya) add to the mystic and the aesthetic composition.

Neither Morgan, nor Rajasinghe, nor Duval are married or have any family. They are, or have been, brilliant workaholics. Morgan ultimately gets rid of the Mahanayake and the Sangha (from Adam's Peak to Lhasa) in

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25 Asimov, "Evidence," reproduced in *PSF*, pp. 173 - 192.

experimenting on his tower. As we read on, as when we read many other Space-Travel Association fiction, we feel - rather, we do not feel anything except the fear of heights and space-we think, this is it: work, achievement, brilliance. That is our future life: there is nothing else. No one else. We, the present day human beings (assuming that we still are!), will not be there: Except tourists, one does not even feel that there are any (human) beings in Taprobane or Sri Lanka-below the super structures, the space-stations and the tele-screens that connect Morgan, Duval, Rajasinghe and other workaholics in the story. Morgan sacrifices his life for the tower and ends up as the hero. But even more than in this story, which at least has a more mundane background (just a little above Sri Lanka), in many stories of space-travel the reader does not *feel* that the spacemen have any emotions. But a hero must be able to feel fear. If one is like a machine, one can take a chance, and get destroyed in space. It does not mean anything. A machine cannot be a hero in a true sense, but machines are made to be so in science fiction.

Science fiction writers like Asimov have made even larger claims for SF. He has commented, for example, that science fiction is the only relevant literature for today's world.[26] Although I have cited his claim, I do not wish to explore it any further.

On the positive side, science fiction has had predictive and educative value. H.G. Wells anticipated the use of military tanks in warfare and other innovations.[27] SF writers have taken up issues like atom bombs, overpopulation, environmental pollution, long before others thought about them according to some claims.[28] I mention here one little story, named "Superiority" by Arthur C. Clarke.[29] It indicates that great superiority in new weapons does not necessarily bring victory. It was published in 1951, and it almost foresaw Vietnam. Clarke's story is now required reading for an engineering course at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.[30]

Again, science fiction popularizes science. Even otherwise many science fiction writers are educators and popularisers. For example, H.G. Wells was immensely interested in education. Arthur C. Clarke has written and

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26 *Asimov*, p. 60.

27 Snow, p. 59.

28 *Asimov*, pp. 14-15.

29 Arthur C. Clarke, "Superiority," reproduced in *PSF*, pp. 351-359.

30 op.cit., p. 349.

broadcast on a variety of scientific subjects. Asimov has written over two hundred books, only some thirty odd of them are science fiction.

The feeling that science fiction is not serious literature has been widespread. Even today SF is considered something outside the mainstream of literature. Although it has begun to get the notice of academics and a few courses on it are being taught at the universities in countries like USA and Australia, there is resistance to it being in the curricula of English departments. This, some hold, is the usual resistance to anything "outside" or "new", but that is probably not the whole truth. Although science fiction and the detective story are said to belong to different genres one often sees something of the detective story, the mystery novel, in works of science fiction. Indeed, some of the major story-writers have been writing straight mysteries as well as science fiction mysteries. Asimov is one of them. He created his own outer space Sherlock Holmes - Elijah Baley (of the city of New York Police Department!) who first appeared in his *Galaxy* (1953). Again, writers like Asimov, started writing very young, and as contributors to magazines, though perhaps they matured early.

The idea that there is something common to the mystery story and science fiction comes from other aspects of their construction. First, the language in both these used to be simple, straightforward and rational. Next, both the mystery story and science fiction usually have to depend on the location-in this, science fiction much more than the mystery story - has to concentrate on constructing the location and the gadgets or the alternative world that it reveals. This affects the development of characters and their relations in the story which is what gives depth to a novel. The characters in a detective story are flat or puppet like. The same seems to be the case in science fiction, and this can happen for a number of additional reasons. The science fiction writer is dealing more with ideas than with people. His characters can turn out to be puppets who just serve the purpose of conveying ideas. A work like *Brave New World* of Huxley has been criticized for this lapse although others argue that it is exactly what Huxley wanted to do. In addition, as I have already argued, the characters in science fiction tend to become stereotypes with little interplay of human characteristics or display of human emotions such as fear, anger, or love.

Science fiction is also an industry, a big business. It has a clientele in film and television movie makers. It has fan clubs. This too seems to affect its quality. Brian Aldiss, the veteran SF writer and its historian, says, "SF as big business is bringing us a blander product, one that is enjoyable but not enriching. Our audience is predominantly a young one. We need to attract more readers of mature years. As for myself I never thought I was writing for the millions..."

Fredrik Pohl, another SF writer ways, "There is a strong tendency for the SF reader to be somewhere between 14 and 25 years old. The audience is 60% male....

"There is also a tremendous audience for the performance varieties of SF - the films and television productions - ... But, ... many of them are never going to read a book of SF or any kind of literature."[31]

Science fiction also has been accused of being escapist. Asimov answers this charge, thus:

> Science fiction is based on the fact of social changes. In a sense it tries on various changes for size, it tries to ... penetrate the consequences of this change or changes or that, and in the form of a story, it presents the results to the view of the public, a public that needs more and more to have possibilities of change pointed out to it before it is disastrously overwhelmed by it.
>
> It is this which has always made it seem rather ironic to me that science fiction is continually lumped under the heading of "escape literature" and usually as the most extreme kind, in fact. Yet it does not escape into the "isn't" as most fiction does, but into the "just might-possibly be". It is an odd form of escape literature that worries readers with atom bombs, over population, bacterial warfare, trips to the moon and other phenomena, decades before the rest of the world had to take up the problems.
>
> No, No, if science fiction escapes, it is an escape into reality.[32]

I have tried to indicate that science fiction goes well with the social and mental set of the time,[33] and as science is going to stay with us, science fiction is also going to stay with us. It will have a role to play as educative literature. So far it has not been able to get into the mainstream of literature.

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31 *PW.* p. 46.

32 Jean Fiedler & Jim Male, *Isaac Asimov*, New York: Frederick Unger Publishing Co., New York, (1982), pp. 1-2.

33 Charles N. Brown, Editor and Publisher *of Locus: The Newspaper of the Science Fiction Field*, says, "SF is one of the few genres that reflect the world we live in today-instead of the world that we lived in yesterday". quoted in *PW.*, p. 39.

But at least some of it, and as time goes on, more of it, probably will turn out to be serious literature. Mainstream writers like Mark Twain, Jonathan Swift, Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, Aldous Huxley have been associated with it. And some works which could be counted as serious literature has already been produced. George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four* is one such example.

Isaac Asimov's *"Nightfall"* (I give the outline of this story in the notes)[34] is a much acclaimed story. Arthur C. Clarke's *2001:A Space Odyssey* has been praised as a work of great mystical power. A recent SF work which is philosophical, poetic and rich with satiric humour and social comment is Harlan Ellison's *"Repent Harlequin;" said the Ticktockman* from which I quoted earlier on.

Brian Aldiss thinks that science fiction works on a Philosophical level. "SF is not about reality" he says, "it's about sharpening our understanding of reality."[35]

And if science fiction does that, and does that well, we could not ask for much more.

R.D. GUNARATNE

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34 "Nightfall" is a story set on the planet Lagash where at least one of six suns is always shining. But every 2050 years the planet goes into total darkness, according to the book of revelations and the scientists find this to be correct. When total darkness comes stars - thirty thousand of them-appear. People go panicky and mad with the darkness and the sight of the stars and they set fire to the cities and the whole civilization is destroyed thus every 2050 years.

35 *PW*, p. 60.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S "MICHAEL": AN EXERCISE IN PROXEMICS

William Wordsworth's "Michael"[1] (1800) may be profitably read in terms of its proxemics,[2] interpreting the poem's narrative of a human tragedy in terms of the changes effected by alteration of Real Spatial Practices (RSPs),[3] and the close imbrication of body-place-power relations.

The inaugural image of spatialisation invokes the proxemics of body-place and social relations: "If from the public way you turn your steps" (1.1). The private/public territorialisation calls attention to property rights and ownership, right of way/movement - and therefore of the common *body's* locationability in this place, and the human body's interpellation in(to) a place - through her/his practice, emotional attachment, or memories. A whole proxemics of power relations (ownership and class), subjectivity (emotional investment identity) and meaning (achievement, labour) is initiated. Power is exercised through RSPs, where specific principles of production and consumption (agriculture, sheep rearing) are topographically particularised to suggest a social cohesion (*Grasmere's* agro-economy, landownership). It is also the site of future fractures. Michael's property and its practices are imaged much later, but Wordsworth has proleptically indicated the differentiation and "spatial acting-out"[4] of the landscape through practices (*walking* along *public* paths). Wordsworth focalises the *route* to Michael's place, with its adjacent heap of "unhewn stones" (1.17).

Michael's *body* is Wordsworth's first focus (I. 42-44), followed by its spatial orientation. Michael's integration with his surroundings, his kindness and

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1 Wordsworth, William. *The Poetical Works*. Ed. E. DeSelincourt. Oxford: Clarendon, 1952 (1944).

2 "Proxemics" is a term used by Heidi J. Nast and Steve Pile to study the relationship between body-place-power. For an elaboration see, Nast and Pile (Ed.) *Places through the Body*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998, especially pages: 407-410.

3 I owe this framework for reading spatial practices to Steve Pile's work in *The Body and the City: Psychoanalysis, Space and Subjectivity*. London and New York: Routledge: 1997. See especially pages: 156-158 and 166-7.

4 The notion of a "spatial acting-out", which eloquently describes the actualisation of the place through the body's acts is from Michel de Certeau's seminal *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Tr. Steven Rendell. Berkley: U of California P, 1988. See pages 97-100.

guardianship over lesser creatures (I. 48-60, 70-73), is the imaginary representation of spaces. This represents, through various signs and codes, Michael's different RSPs. By constantly referring to his solitary splendour upon topographical heights, Wordsworth conveys Michael's distanciation - literal and metaphoric - from others. Michael's capabilities on his terrain links body and place (he hears/sees/feels/protects with his body-strength) and grants Michael epistemic power[5] over Nature. The networks of power linking Michael to the land originate in his *knowledge-as-practice* and his *subjectivity-through-emotional attachment* ("those hills/had laid/strong hold on his affections", I. 74-5).

The RSPs of agriculture and sheep rearing aside, Wordsworth also articulates the differentiations of home/away, inside/outside in terms of division of labour (domestic, public) and gender roles that are implicated in power relations. While Michael and Luke toil outside, Isabel is confined to the home ("her heart was in her house", 1. 82), among "aged utensil[s]" (I. 115). With the heap of "unhewn stones" Wordsworth undertakes a symbolic representation of these RSPs (the eventual transformation of RSPs will also be embodied herein): Michael's house "stood single", located on a "plot of rising ground" (implying Michael's economic/class separation) and its light "is a public symbol" (I. 130-133). Wordsworth's hint that a story surrounds the heap of "unhewn tones" anticipates changes in the symbolic value (I. 18-20).

Michael's fears of losing his land - and the attendant alteration of power relations/class positions - are expressed in proxemics: "Our Luke shall leave us/the land shall not go from us/ and it shall be free/ we shall possess it" (I. 244 - 245). Before the place-human link can be altered inter-human bonds must loosen, spatially at first, and metaphorically later. Isabel, reconciling herself to Luke's imminent departure, does so through a spatio-geographical image: she recalls Richard Bateman from the same village, who had ventured "beyond the seas". On his return he had "left estates and monies to the poor/and at his birth-place, built chapel floored/with marble, which he sent from foreign lands" (I. 268-270).

Spatial displacement alters networks of power. Luke leaves Grasmere to retain the power relations (embodied in Michael's ownership of *his* lands, and *his* spatial practices: "the land/looks as if it would never endure/another Master" (I. 378-80). The sheep-fold is simultaneously symbolic of familial affection and succession rights. Luke, growing up, had already been inscribed within similar, hereditary class/ownership power relations. The oak tree becomes symbolic of patriarchal and paternal power (I. 165), and the scene of Luke's induction into the system of production. The sheep-fold is a symbol of family ties ("links of

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5 The term "epistemic power" is from Peter Morris's *Power : A Philosophical Analysis*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1987

love", I. 401) *and*, as Michael describes it in juridical terms, a "convenant" (I. 414). This covenant, of ownership and eventual succession, is to be in form of an alteration of the *topography* by the *body*, for Michael suggests that the first stone/alteration be done by Luke's "own hands" (I. 387).

A change in the RSPs - in terms of succession, anticipated in Luke's "watchmanship" (I. 183-87) - has already been effected, since Michael is forced to "begin again/tasks that were resigned to [Luke]" (I. 391-92). Luke now *away*, also alters the relationship between places. Luke writes letters (proxemical practices since they modify conditions of distances, near/far, home/away) of the "wondrous" other world, the city (I. 433). The city is contrasted with Grasmere, with its different spatial practices (urbanised, and involved in trade, (I. 249-250). From such an exoticisation of the "distant", the image shifts to the wickedness of the Other place. Luke's downfall - emplotted within his changing relationship with the city, which is now "dissolute" (I. 444), transports Luke farther (away) to "a hiding-place" beyond the seas (I. 446). The alteration - of spatial arrangements and practices, familial relationships, succession - is almost complete. It only remains for the transformation of real practices and symbolic representations to alter.

The break is again conceptualised in the body-place link: Michael goes to the sheep fold, sits "by the sheep-fold", but never "lifted up a single stone" (I. 466-69). The breaking/altering of the (familial) network, and Michael's refusal to employ his body/hands at that covenant/place anticipates the transfer of ownership. The new ownership is embodied proxemically: "at her death, the estate/was sold, and went into a stranger's hand" (I. 475). The *new* spatial practice of the *new* dispensation, completely erases older relationships: "the cottage/is gone - the ploughshare has been through the ground" (I. 476-77). The transformation of these real practices also effects symbolic representations. The (unchanging) oak tree and the heap of (unchanging) stones are anachronistic spaces in a time of "great changes" (I. 478).

Thus Wordsworth's poem of the English countryside may be read in terms of its proxemics. Proxemics which explores the spatialisation of the body and the corporealisation of space helps generate a reading of "Michael", which, while reasserting its status as a topographic poem, also imbeds a subtext of power-relations.

PRAMOD K. NAYAR

SAMBUDU UDANA: A SINHALA RENDERING OF MĀTṚCEṬA'S BUDDHASTOTRA CALLED ŚATAPAÑCĀŚATKA

Ananda Kulasuriya

Godage Saha Sahodarayo, Colombo: Sri Lanka.
xiv × 130 pages. Price. Rupees 200.

Hymns of Praise, or eulogies called *stotra* and *stava*, are important components of Sanskrit literature. Mātṛceṭa, the author of a fair number of such devotional poems, has won the recognition and appreciation of both scholars and faithful adherents of Buddhism.

I-tsing, the Chinese pilgrim who visited India in the seventh century A.D., says that Mātṛceṭa was a famous poet and that his hymns to the Buddha were sung far and wide. The following legend heard by I-tsing in India and cited by Moriz Winternitz in 1912 provides evidence for the poet's fame. "Once when the Buddha was walking through a forest, a nightingale began to sing sweet melodies, as though she were praising the glory of the Lord, whereupon the Buddha said to his disciples that this nightingale would once be reborn as Mātṛceṭa." I-tsing, who took delight in listening to Mātṛceṭa's hymns recited in the assemblies of monks, describes them as charming compositions "equal in beauty to the heavenly flowers," containing high principles that "rival in dignity the lofty peaks of a mountain." I-tsing's admiration of Mātṛceṭa' prompted him to translate his poem, the *Śatapañcāśatka* into Chinese.

Edited versions of Mātṛceṭa's works were not available to scholars in the first half of the 20th century. Writing in 1920, Berriedale Keith refers to "a mysterious Mātṛceṭa, of whose numerous works fragments alone, from his *Śatapañcāśatikastotra* [sic], exist in Sanskrit." Keith noted that these fragments showed a fairly elegant style of religious lyric devotion. With the advance of modern scholarship since then, A.K.Warder (1974) was able to describe Mātṛceṭa as a poet who had attained the highest art in the phase of Buddhist *stotra*, epistle and tract literature, and to discuss his poetic talent, citing examples from his

poems.

Apart from the *Śatapañcāśatka*, a Sinhala rendering of which is under consideration here, the other well-known poem of Mātṛceṭa's is the *Varṇārhavarṇastotra*, sometimes called *Catuḥśataka*, the Hymn of 400 verses, some information about which may be of interest to readers of this review. The text of a Tibetan translation of the first four chapters of this *stotra* together with an English rendering was published by F.W. Thomas in 1905, in volume 34 of the *Indian Antiquary*. D.R. Shackleton Bailey gave the Sanskrit text and an English translation under the title, "The Praise of the Praiseworthy" in 1950, in Part 3 of the 13th volume of *The Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London. Bailey published the Sanskrit text and the English translation of the remaining eight chapters of the poem in Part 4 of the same volume. He also reproduced here the Tibetan text of these chapters. More recently, in 1987, an edition of the Tibetan translation of this *stotra* and a German rendering of it was published by Jens-Uwe Hartmann in Göttingen. The `praiseworthy' praised in this poem is the Buddha himself.

The discovery of a complete manuscript of Mātṛceṭa's *Śatapañcāśatka* in 1936 was a notable addition to Sanskrit literature. Only mutilated fragments of the text had been found earlier. Rāhula Sāṃkṛtyāyana, who located this manuscript in the temple library of the Saskya monastery in Tibet, made a transcript and published an edition of it in 1937, in collaboration with K.P. Jayaswal, as an appendix to the *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*. The name given to Mātṛceṭa' s poem in the colophon of this manuscript is *Adhyarddhaśataka*, a numerical name like the better known title *Śatapañcāśatka*. Though these names imply that the hymn contained 150 verses, the text discovered in Tibet consists of 153 verses.

D.R. Shackleton Bailey, who was unhappy about Jayaswal and Sāṃkṛtyāyana choosing to print their work in the likeness of a critical edition instead of presenting a simple transcript of the manuscript, published a critical and scholarly edition of it in Cambridge, in 1951. Bailey's text is based on a collation of a large quantity of manuscript material and a thorough study of published sources. This edition of the Sanskrit text of the *Śatapañcāśatka* is accompanied by a Tibetan translation of it, a commentary by a monk called Nandipriya, found only in a Tibetan translation made in the eleventh century, a Chinese translation and an English translation with notes. Referring to his English translation, Bailey says that it is a fairly literal one, without pretensions to any other merit. The Introduction to Bailey's publication contains much information under the sub-titles: I Mātṛceṭa. and his works; II. The *Śatapañcāśatka*; and III. The Text, where

he discusses the manuscripts and editions he used, the commentary of Nandipriya, which "next to the manuscripts" is the "most important aid in the textual criticism of the poem and a valuable guide to its interpretation", the Tibetan and Chinese translations of the text, and Dignāga's *Miśrakastotra* in which verses from the *Śatapañcāśatka* are interspersed. Regarding the complex problem of the date of Mātṛceṭa, Bailey says that he could only attempt to assemble the data and suggest such interpretations as seemed provisionally tenable. The tentative conclusion that he arrived at after a detailed discussion is "that Mātṛceṭa was an old man in the reign of Kaniṣka II and therefore lived approximately either between A.D. 160 and 260 or else nearly a century earlier, according to our ideas of Kuṣāna chronology."

An English rendering of the *Śatapañcāśatka* by Venerable S. Dhammika under the title Mātṛceṭa's Hymn to the Buddha appeared in 1989, published by the Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka. In the introduction to this translation, Bhikkhu Dhammika states that he "attempted to produce a readable rendering of this beautiful and important work" by reworking the complete English translation of Bailey and parts of the poem translated by Edward Conze and published in New York in 1954, both of which "do not give sufficient regard to the spirit of the work and the author's intention in writing it - to inspire and uplift."

Rendering Mātṛceṭa's *Śatapañcāśatka* into Sinhala has been long overdue. This task has now been accomplished with the publication of the *Sambudu Udana* by Ananda Kulasuriya, Emeritus Professor of Sinhala of the University of Peradeniya and a former Dean of its Faculty of Arts. Being a Sanskrit scholar himself, Kulasuriya has the ability to read the original text of Mātṛceṭa which he wished to introduce to the Sinhala reader. His mastery of several modern languages has enabled him to read previous publications relevant to Mātṛceṭa and his works and to present a wealth of information in the introduction to his book.

The core of *Sambudu Udana* is the Sinhala rendering in verse of the *Śatapañcāśatka*. With the exception of four or five verses the metre used here is that called "yaha gī" in Sinhala works on metre. There is no rhyme in these *gī* as in the case of the *śloka* used in the original work.

Kulasuriya says that he was inspired to translate the *Śatapañcāśatka* into Sinhala after reading Bhikkhu Dhammika's rendering of it. From about the year 1990, Kulasuriya had been in the habit of translating a few verses in the course of his travels to Colombo from Kandy by train. That he was able to do so unaffected

by the noise and other disturbances that the average commuter experiences on this journey provides ample testimony to the religious fervour that motivated him to present this Sinhala version of the hymn.

Sambudu Udana is an accurate rendering of Mātṛceṭa's poem, with nothing added and nothing left out. Yet it is not a mere literal translation. It retains the spirit of the original work, a hymn composed "to recount a portion of the sage's virtues even if it were only for one's own delight." The harmonious blend of sound and sense in the Sinhala *gī* pleases the ear, while the thoughts they convey appeal to the heart, evoking feelings of faith, *śraddhā*, and *bhakti*, devotion for the Buddha. Besides creating serene joy, *prasāda*, this hymn to the Buddha has the added value of inspiring the reader to follow the example of the Buddha by practising at least some of the virtues highlighted in it. An idea of some of these may be gained from the following extracts, mostly based on Bhikkhu Dhammika's version of the poem.

Upodghāta (Introduction. Verses 1 - 9): The Buddha's good deeds are many and wonderful; his virtues numerous and strong. Words fail in describing them. Yet, [the poet says] I have much to say, for they bring much merit.

Hetustava (10 - 26): Praise of the Causes (the six supreme virtues, the *pramīs*): You gave even your own flesh, not to mention your wealth and possessions. You gave even your life-breath honouring the requests of mendicants (*dānapāramitā*). It was not fear of hell or desire for heaven but the purity of heart alone that made you practise righteousness (*śīla*). Regardless of the pain when assassins cut you to pieces, you felt only compassion for them (*kṣānti*). Conscious that the Deathless State is hard to attain without deeds hard to perform, you fostered effort (*virya*), regardless of self. You had no attachment even for the results of meditation (*dhyāna*), for the motive in your heart was always compassion. Zealous for enlightenment (*prajñā*) in birth after birth, striving through three incalculable periods of time, you gained the highest state, partnered only by your resolution.

Nirupamastava (27- 41) Praise of Incomparability: By not envying the superior, despising the inferior, or competing with equals, you attained pre-eminence in the world. The purity of the moon, the sky or a pool in autumn appears clouded when compared with the purity of your words, thoughts and deeds.

Adbhutastava (42 - 51). Praise of Wonderful Deeds: What is truly wondrous is this. After you conquered Māra, on that same night you were able to conquer your own defilements. Three things have been conquered by three things, passion by passionlessness, anger by love, and ignorance by wisdom.

Rūpastava (52 - 57) Praise of Form: Your body seems to say to your virtues: "I am blessed to have you," and your virtues seem to respond: "Where better could we dwell?"

Karuṇāstava (58 - 66) Praise of compassion: Although you preferred the delights of solitude, compassion led you to spend your time among the crowd. You long bound yourself to compassion in order to free all those in the world who were bound by defilements.

Vacanastava (67 - 81) Praise of Speech: Your speech is excellent in three ways. Based on fact, it is truthful, free of defilements it causes no confusion, and rightly spoken it is easily understood. Truly your words are for all. They delight the wise, strengthen those of middling intelligence and illuminate the minds of the dull.

Śāsanastava (82 - 91) Praise of the Teaching: Freedom, the joy of enlightenment, reverence for your virtues and peace - these four benefits are gained from your teaching.

Praṇidhistava (92 - 101) Praise of the Vow, the Earnest Wish: To praise you removes faults, to recollect you brings joy, to follow you gives understanding, to know you purifies the heart. You are dear for your benevolence, charming for your tenderness, beloved for your gentleness and honoured for all your virtues.

Mārgāvatārastava (102 - 112) Praise of Guidance: You have pity for the suffering, good-will for the happy, compassion for the distressed, benevolence for all. You have given the gift of the Dhamma unstintingly to all, regardless of birth, age, caste, time, or place.

Duṣkarastava (113 - 123) Praise of Arduous Deeds: You help those who wish you ill more than most men help those who wish them well. Those who sought to give you poison and fire you approached with compassion and nectar.

Kauśalastava (124 - 134) Praise of Skill. Through your skill in teaching the harsh became gentle, the mean became generous and the cruel became kind. Delighted with the flavour of your teaching, many wise ones left their beds of gold to sleep on beds of straw.

Ānṛṇyastava (135 - 153) Praise of Freedom from Debt: Many disciples have you raised capable of working for the welfare of the world; many personal converts have you trained, Subhadra being the last. What still remains of your debt to living beings?

Kulasuriya's *gī* composition is followed by a set of educative notes on some of the verses. The text of Mātṛceṭa's *Śatapañcāśatka* in Nāgrī script appearing on pages 117 - 130 is a reproduction of that printed in the *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*. The same text in Sinhala characters is given on pages 99 - 116. Editions of the Sanskrit text being rare, it is very useful to have them here.

The Introduction (pages 1 - 66) which precedes Kulasuriya's *gī* provides much valuable information, most of which, as acknowledged, is based on Bailey's study. Other publications of more recent times have been consulted. Bibliographical information about these are given in the notes. These publications are not easy of access to Sri Lankan readers and Kulasuriya has done a great service by evaluating them and presenting their content. Kulasuriya discusses Mātṛceṭa's vision of life and his poetic talent on pages 38 - 48 of his introduction. Here he illustrates his comments, quoting examples from the *Varṇārhavarṇastotra*, which examples he renders into Sinhala as well. A discussion on metre on pages 49 - 62 enhances the value of the introduction. However it has to be mentioned that the proof-reading has not been thorough. Several typographical errors and careless mistakes found in the introduction must necessarily be corrected in the desirable event of printing a second edition of the book.

One could conclude with confidence that Kulasuriya has achieved what he set out to do, to present a Sinhala version of Mātṛceṭa's *stotra*, reflecting the religious fervour of the poet and retaining the flavour of the poem. The cover design by Ananda Jagoda depicting the Buddha preaching the Dhamma to monks and gods, who seem to listen with devotion, their hands folded, is most suitable for *Sambudu Udana*, the Joyful Utterance of Kulasuriya, devotee-cum-scholar.

RATNA HANDURUKANDE

TWO RECENT BOOKS BY ANITA DESAI

Fasting, Feasting. Anita Desai. Adelaide: Griffin Press, 1999.
Diamond Dust and Other Stories. Anita Desai. London: Chatto & Windus, 2000.

Anita Desai's *Fasting, Feasting* (a novel), and *Diamond Dust* (a short-story collection), remind me of two poems by the Indian poet A.K. Ramanujan: "Pleasure" and "Still Another View of Grace."[1] In "Pleasure," a Jaina monk tries to repress the demands of his corporeal self—"for the reek and sight of Mango bud"—by placing himself, thick-coated with honey, on an ant-hill and crying "Pleasure! Pleasure! Pleasure!" at the pain of a million red-ant bites. "Still Another View of Grace," on the other hand, speaks of the poetic persona's failure to fend off Desire--personified in the form of a street prostitute—through invocations of the prohibitive strictures of "our land": "Bred Brahmin among singers of shivering hymns/I shudder to the bone at hungers that roam the street/beyond the constable's beat." The resistance is futile: "Commandments crumbled/in my father's past . . . . as I shook a little/and took her, behind the laws of our land." Hungers, literal and figural, repressed and acknowledged, unfulfilled, or only partly fulfilled, roam the pages of the latest works by Anita Desai as well.

Fasting, Feasting, the novel, moves between continents, nations and cultures to offer us two memorable portraits of family—one Indian, one American—where people suffer from hungers that food alone cannot satisfy. The novel is unique in the Desai *ouvre* for the attention it pays to the taken-for-granted rituals of cooking, serving, and eating of food—rituals in which women, moreover, play central roles. One is reminded for instance of Uma eating the home-made pink ice-cream given her by Mrs Joshi: "ate it up, so fast, in such quick gulps, that Mrs Joshi has to fill it a second time" (73). Or in another setting, of Melanie "hungrily ... eating the ice-cream. Her lips part so she can cram the spoon in, loaded and dripping onto her chin, then diving down for more, and more, of the sweet, sticky, dribbling stuff with which she needs to satisfy herself" (215). Arun, Uma's brother, the one who crosses continents, thinks he sees a resemblance between these two scenes of hunger:

> "[A] resemblance to the contorted face of an enraged sister who, failing to express her outrage against neglect, against

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1 A.K. Ramanujan, *Second Sight,* Delhi: Oxford U P, 1986, and *Selected Poems,* Delhi: Three Crowns, n.d.

misunderstanding, against inattention to her unique and singular being and its hungers, merely spits and froths in ineffectual protest. How strange to encounter it here, Arun thinks, where so much is given, where there is both license and plenty." (214)

Yet food, commonly understood as a symbol of caring, communion, and love, does not satisfy. Instead, it is presented, in the novel, as a sign of control, dissent, and frustration. In the Das family, the women must reserve the choice foods for Papa, whose privilege is a sign of the patriarchal power he enjoys within the family. For Mama, almost fully merged in Papa, that is how things ought to be. Not for Uma, the elder daughter, who signifies her resentment by putting the fruit basket "with a thump before her father. Bananas, oranges, apples—there they are, for him" (23). Food can also be used to control those below the patriarch in the family hierarchy. Papa, who sees Arun as his "second self" in a patrilineal line of descent, tries to make a "man" out of him by turning the "born-vegetarian" Arun into a meat-eater. In America, Arun encounters another patriarch, Mr Patton, who too tries to assert his authority over family by compelling their presence at a meat-filled communion over which he presides like a high priest—the barbecue--that his family in their different ways resist: "Will Mrs Patton make the confession for him? Will Mrs Patton be brave and make it unnecessary for him to speak, publicly reveal himself as unworthy, unfit to take the wafer upon his tongue, the wine into his throat?" (165).

Still in this novel where women remain hungry whether they feast or fast, whether they stock, cook, or serve food, the hungers unfulfilled are not those of the belly alone. For Uma, who has been starved of love and attention in a 20-year spell of service for the family, the pangs are certainly not those of the stomach. Taken out of school when the much-awaited son is born, given in marriage when the family decides she is ripe for marriage, and withdrawn from the marriage market when the family deems she is no longer eligible, Uma cannot act as she wills but must be governed by the dictates of MamaPapa, a duo appealing from the point of view of characterization, yet formidable too, in their merged Siamese-twin self: "Having fused into one, they had gained so much in substance, in stature, in authority, that they loomed large enough as it was; they did not need separate histories and backgrounds to make them even more immense" (6). In occasional outbursts of rebellion, Uma shows how much she finds this life of Duty unappealing, unfulfilling. Three episodes speak eloquently of the hungers that Uma suffers from: her one outbreak of merriment at Carlton Hotel with her black-sheep-Cousin Ramu, her unauthorized stay at the Ashram with Mira-masi where she becomes the chosen one of God, and her attempted drowning where she thinks she is heeding the

seductive call of the river. Uma's escapade with Cousin Ramu at Carlton Hotel is the most memorable: "Uma rolls against the red rexine seat, her hair escaping in long strands from the steel pins that usually keep it knotted tightly in place. It lies untidily about her cheeks and neck. Behind the thick lenses of her spectacles, her eyes roll in time to the music. She takes another sip of the shandy Ramu has insisted she drink and hiccups like a drunkard in a farce about fallen women" (50-51). Her mother's reaction? "You, you disgrace to the family—nothing but disgrace, *ever*!" (53).

Yet, as her favourite collection of poems—Ella Wheeler Wilcox's *Poems of Pleasure*—reveals, Uma has not given up her insistence on an inner life, or of her desire to escape that life of relentless duty that her gender, age, and station in life had forced upon her. Faithful adherence to a life of relentless Duty, Desai seems to imply, anyway does not bring rewards as the story of Anamika, Uma's cousin, dramatizes. Anamika, an embodiment of perfection, with her combination of good looks, good nature, and intelligence, too cannot survive the demands that her gendered existence imposes upon her. The horrible death-by-burning that is the fate of Anamika, at the hands of her husband and mother-in-law, which the narrator recounts in dispassionate tones, is the clearest indication of Desai's critique of gendered inequities in this novel and of her socio-historical awareness.

Gendered inequities are, however, not an exclusive feature of Indian society alone. Desai's long years of residence in the United States have endued her with a comparative perspective on cultures—Asian and American, First and Third World--that she puts to good use in this novel in order to highlight "sameness" in the difference. If Uma Das is starved, Melanie Patton is over-full. Clearly, the portrait of Melanie Patton is Desai's commentary on teenage hungers that arise from surfeit: *Anorexia Nervosa* and *Bulimia.* Material plenitude does not always satisfy. Through Arun, who to some extent is an outsider in both his home culture as well as in suburban America where he is guest for the Summer, Desai offers a subtle critique of capitalist patriarchy where neither unlimited choice nor seemingly unlimited buying power satiates the hungers that lurk within the hearts of women of the Patton household. Mrs Patton who roams the aisles of supermarkets in tee-shirts emblazoned with the mottos, "Born to Shop" and "Shop till You Drop," is only interested in keeping the shelves of her refrigerator from going empty. She can neither understand the emptiness within Melanie, nor her peevish demands for help. But Mrs Patton's somewhat apologetic explanation to Arun of her family's strange eating habits reveals a sense of guilt and lack: "We don't sit down to meals like we used to. Everyone eats at different times and wants different meals. We just don't get to eating together much now that they're grown. So I just fill the freezer and let

them take down what they like, when they like. Keeping the freezer full—that's my job, Ah-roon" (197). Moreover, her newly-discovered, and fearfully-confessed, vegetarianism is resistance to patriarchal authority that Mr Patton insists on through meat-filled meals. However, her attempt to fill the void within her through an alternative family with Arun, on the basis of their shared vegetarianism, also fails. The unappetizing Dhal curry—gooey, malodorous—is testimony to this failure of familial bonding across cultures that, to some extent, is due to the reluctance of Arun who has no wish to submit himself once again to the bonds that family imposes. Mrs Patton takes refuge in coddling her own body—in a bizarre ritual of sun-bathing—but cannot avoid the tragic truth about her daughter for long. And Arun is only too happy to leave this suburban American household where he is not sure what is more dangerous: "the pursuit of health or of sickness" (204-205). Desai however does not intend her readers to go away with the impression that all attempts at bonding are futile and meaningless. The novel ends with a box of tea and a woolen shawl from Arun to Mrs Patton—gifts of love--that gesture towards a willingness to satiate hungers that are not literal, not always of the stomach.

Anita Desai's *Fasting, Feasting*, to me, is one of the best in her *ouvre* because it places the richly evocative language that Desai has always excelled in at the service of an explicitly political commentary. At the beginning of her novelistic career, Desai had held that she is not "political." But in this novel she takes the job of critiquing patriarchy, holding it responsible for the hungers that women suffer from, very seriously. The story of Anamika, albeit marginal to the main plot, is one of the best. Anamika, "lovely as a flower is lovely, soft, petal-skinned, bumblebee-eyed, pink-lipped" (67), foregrounds in no uncertain terms the systemic inequities that disadvantage women vis-a-vis men, turning even the best of them into horribly disfigured corpses. Desai's critique, moreover, does not foreclose the possibility of resistance. So, in contrast to Anamika is her cousin Uma who might be forced into a life of service but does not submit herself willingly to the terms of her servitude. Even Mama betrays an implicit wish for a separate existence from Papa in her stolen visits to the neighbour's for a game of gin rummy when Papa is away from home. *Fasting, Feasting,* therefore, in its mix of the poetic and the political, fully satisfies.

I am not sure if one can say the same for her short-story collection, *Diamond Dust*—and not just because it lacks the political bite of the novel. The nine stories of this collection, too, it might be said, speak of hungers triggered or satisfied by a particular visitation—welcome or unwelcome, e Top Dwellers"—excel in richly evocative moods and landscapes, momentary dispensations of blessings, sudden illuminations.

"Royalty" speaks of Raja, like royalty able to arrive unannounced, and like royalty fawned upon, whose only-too-brief presence in the household and lives of an old, middle class Indian couple—Ravi and Sarla--enable them to return to their exuberant, romantic youth at Oxford. His dashing and majestic presence shakes them, especially Sarla, out of her age-induced stolidity and triggers in her yearnings and impulses that she cannot articulate. The story ends with Raja leaving as abruptly as he had arrived, like royalty able to pick and choose the time of his departure, but leaving Sarla with a discontent that the company of Ravi alone cannot fill. The visit in "Winterscape," on the other hand, is announced, yet unwelcome. Beth, the Canadian wife of Rakesh, does not look forward to the arrival of her husband's twin mothers; nor does she understand the spirit of sacrifice and sharing that had enabled the two sisters to share in the bringing up of Rakesh: "She knew she would not give up her baby for anything, anyone, certainly not to her sister Susan who was hardly capable of bringing up her own, and yet these two had lived their lives ruled by that one impulse, totally unnatural to her" (47). Though no sudden illumination strikes Beth during the visit of Rakesh's two mothers, and the visit might in general be declared unsatisfactory for all concerned, the story hints at some accommodation of an alien point of view when it, at the end, zeroes in on a winterscaped photograph of the two women—"with a view of the white window, and the two widows in white, and the whirling snow" (48)-- taken by Beth, and found room for on the door of her refrigerator. It is in the evocation of such subtle moods that Desai excels. "Five Hours to Simla, or Faisla" held a charm for me because of the *chutzpah* of the truck driver who holds up traffic stretching for miles in both directions in his insistence on compensation for a stone slung at his windscreen by a goat-herd. The roadside drama appeals because of Desai's ability to imagine an unexpected situation—such as a recalcitrant truck-driver--that might transform a weary, monotonous long-distance journey into one of drama and colour. But the potential danger in the story is also just that. A non-Indian, or rather a non-South Asian reader (and many of Desai's readers would be just that), might read this almost-magical transformation of a drab, barren, seemingly uninhabited landscape into one of excitement, lurking violence and (don't forget!) food, drinks and toy vendors (only the snake-charmers are missing) as an "orientalist" side-show that merely reconfirms, rather than subverts, the legendary Forsterian "muddle" that is India. A shake of the head, accompanied by the remark "only in India!", might be the response of such a reader (dare I say "western"?) habituated to her life in a law-and-order society and unable to imagine a situation where one man may momentarily deny her the certainties that she governs her life by. The last story of the collection—"Roof-Top Dwellers"—deals with a situation that is very different to the ones delineated in the others—a young Indian woman's attempt to find an independent existence away from both the comforts and confinements of her middle

class family home in a *barsati*. It offers a close-up view of *barsati* living—its disadvantages, in fact, from Moyna's point of view—but ends with her opting to hang on to her hard-won independence when the opportunity presents itself, in the form of a letter containing a marriage proposal from her mother, for her to return to her middle class existence.

Desai achieves only limited success in the other five stories in capturing the exact mood, or fully dramatizing the situation, that she was intent on conveying. "Diamond Dust," the title story of the collection, is a good example. This story—about a middle-aged, middle-class Indian administrative officer's obsession with a dog named Diamond and his sense of devastation (even death) when the dog disappears—although sub-titled tragedy, borders on melodrama, if not farce. And I am not sure if the irony is intentional on the part of the author. Certainly this picture of a staid middle-class existence and neighborhood enlivened by an unruly dog is well-done and we may even sympathize with Mr Das's sense of loss when the dog vanishes. Yet the sight of Mr Das "walking the dusty streets in the livid heat of June, hatless, abject, crying, 'Diamond! Diamond! Diamond!" (59) is in danger of losing the elevated tone of the tragic for farce. In "Tepotzland Tomorrow," on the other hand, the problem is a too-hackneyed theme. The America-returned nephew's nostalgic return to the sites and people of his childhood and youth, and his almost too-predictable inability to respond to the issues, concerns and life-styles of his childhood acquaintances is an all-too-common theme in fiction. And there is little in "Tepotzland," except a dash of local colour, to make it very different from all the other stories on the theme we have encountered before. "Underground" suffers from the author's inability to fully dramatize the sense of loss that Bob McTaggers suffers from after the death of his wife—a loss that has made him opt for an underground existence in the hotel instead of the role of host that his ownership of a hotel imposes upon him. The story ends with the arrival of a family of wild cats at the hotel premises for their evening meal and whose arrival lures McTaggert out of his self-imposed isolation. This story, though somewhat uninteresting relative to the others, however contains one of the most memorable vignettes in the collection. Bob McTaggert here recalls with regret an act of intrusion, into the life of an Arab family, that he himself had been guilty of as a "western" Consultant in the Gulf: "Shrouded in the dust and dimness of day before dawn, intermittently and sporadically illuminated by the small flames shooting up from the bucket, they had about them a quality so fragile, so immaterial and implausible that it could have been a mirage, a dream—a dream he might have had, in fact, of how life should be, how it might be . . ." (72). Desai is at her best when trying to capture such insubstantial and ephemeral moments as the above.

I wonder whether "The Artist's Life" is Desai's little joke on the tribe that she herself belongs to by virtue of being an artist. On the one hand, we have Polly, the teen-ager, newly taken up with art after her Summer Camp experience, who would like to conceive of Art as a means of soaring above the mundane reality. On the other hand, we

have Miss Dodd, Polly's next-door neighbor and Artist, whose house however resembles far more the city's garbage dump than our imagined vision of an artist's abode. The half-finished sculptures that litter her garden speak of the futility rather than the joys of creation. The only reward for her attempts to teach art to juvenile delinquents, on the mend at a half-way house, is a defaced house, luridly yellow-painted with excrement, by an inmate student that she had employed for the summer. Whether the delinquent's racial make-up—black—and his comments on the house and its (white) owner—"dirty" and "ugly" (111-12)—have any bearing on the outcome or any thematic significance, we are not sure. Desai once again prefers the light brush stroke in her seemingly casual reference to that detail but, in this instance, I did not feel that that was adequate. Is the story an oblique comment on Desai's own frustrations as Artist, and as a Teacher of Creating Writing? Perhaps not, as the short-story collection is dedicated to her students at MIT. Nevertheless, "The Artist's Life" reads more like parody, not a serious reflection on artistic creation. Finally, her story, "The Man Who Saw Himself Drown," which has something of the Garcia Marquez touch, but with its philosophical underpinnings definitely derived from the Hindu concept of reincarnation. Here is a man who undergoes the bizarre experience of seeing himself dead and then faces the necessity of reinventing himself anew. But, unlike Jasmine, the eponymous heroine of a Bharati Mukherjee novel, who optimistically declares "we murder who we were in order to be reborn in the image of something new,"[2] he can neither fathom nor face the process of reincarnation: "It seemed to me that by dying my double had not gifted me with possibility, only robbed me of all desire for one . . . (98). He drowns himself and is found by a little boy who comes to broad, help her highlight the commonalities, not the differences, among peoples differently situated, geographically and culturally. Yet it is my feeling that Desai is still most at home when dramatizing Indian situations, illuminating the inner lives of her Indian characters. In other locations, she is still to some extent an outsider looking in, with understanding and sympathy perhaps, but nevertheless with the detached curiosity of an outsider. So, while one appreciates the migrant perspectives, let us hope that, in her future works, Desai will not fully abandon Indian themes, locales, and situations that I for one find the most appealing and convincing.

CARMEN WICKRAMAGAMAGE

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2 Bharati Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, New York: Fawcett Crest, 1989, p. 100.

AUTHOR INDEX TO VOLS. XVI-XXV OF *THE SRI LANKA JOURNAL OF THE HUMANITIES*

The following index covers volumes XVI (1990) to XXV (1999) of *The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*. An Author Index to Vols. I-XV can be found in Vol. XVII & XVIII (1991-1992), pp. 357-375. Vols. XVI-XXI were edited by Prof. Merlin Peris and Vols. XXII-XXV have been edited by Dr. S.W. Perera.

Vol. XVI (1990) was issued to commemorate the late Prof. D.E. Hettiarachchi and a Double Volume XVII & XVIII was issued to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the University of Peradeniya. Vols. XXIV & XXV has also been issued as a Double Volume.

Apart from Nos. XVII-XVIII and XXIV-XXV all volumes consist of a single issue but are designated as Nos. 1 & 2.

I wish to draw the attention of readers to the following corrections:

The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities Vol. XXII (1996) Nos. 1 & 2:

Title of S.W. Perera's article (pp. 37-50) should be:

"*Daughter of Lanka*: A Pioneering 'Radical' Novel of Sri Lanka" and NOT "*Woman of Lanka*: A Pioneering 'Radical' Novel of Sri Lanka"

The error appears in the Contents Page and in the Title above the article although the novel is properly titled in the body of the text.

The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities Vol. XXIII (1997) Nos. 1 & 2:

Title of John Holder's article should be "The Critique of Supernaturalism in Pali Buddhism and Deweyan Pragmatism" and NOT " The Critique of Naturalism in Pali Buddhism and Deweyan Pragmatism".

The error appears in the Contents Page and in the Title above the article.

The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities Vol. XXIV & XXV (1998-99) Nos. 1 & 2:

Title of Nidhani de Andrado's article should be "The Identity of Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*: Wolf or Waif?" and NOT "The Identity of Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*: Woolf or Waif?"

The error appears in the Contents page and the Title above the article.

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