

**“THE IMPERIAL EMBRACE”:  
DIMENSIONS OF RACE, CLASS AND GENDER  
IN  
PAUL SCOTT’S THE RAJ QUARTET**

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This is to certify that this dissertation entitled "**The Imperial Embrace: Dimensions of Race, Class and Gender in Paul Scott's *The Raj Quartet***" submitted by **Someshwar Sati** in partial fulfilment for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** is a bonafide work to the best of our knowledge and has not been submitted for a degree or diploma elsewhere. It may be placed before the examiner for evaluation.

  
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### THE IMPERIAL EMBRACE

...looking at the unfriendly vista of the Arabian Sea which as a boy he had thought the most romantically named ocean in the world, he felt more strongly than ever how perilously close to losing confidence the actual experience of being in India had brought him; and he wanted to go home... so that he could regain lucidity and the calm rhythms of logical thought. These, he knew, depended upon a continuing belief in one's grasp of every issue relevant to one's subject and India seemed to be the last place to be if one wanted to retain a sense of historical proportion about it.<sup>1</sup>

- *A Division of the Spoils*, 1975

In the above passage, while describing Guy Perron's difficulty in structuring his experience of India, Paul Scott paradigmatically captures the sense of bewilderment that many other British characters, both real and imaginary, had felt before Perron on being confronted with the 'inscrutability' of the subcontinent. This baffling encounter with the 'intransigence' of India, and the paralysing terror that occasionally besieged the coloniser, goes counter to the myth of cultural confidence and racial arrogance of a people who had successfully subjugated vast stretches of alien territory since the nineteenth century. The traumatic realisation of the precarious vulnerability of

his position in the 'colonised terrain' and of the inadequacy of the imperial inventory of control lay buried deep within the British position of authority. Of late, it has been argued by critics like Sara Suleri that each cultural act of imperial articulation was neurotically conscious of the limitations of its power, and of its inability to extend its domination over the culture of the conquered people.<sup>2</sup> There was also an acute awareness of the potential threat posed by an Indian 'alterity' which seemed to possess an 'undefined' power of its own and continued to defy the might of the ruling race.

Guy Perron's unsettling experience of India serves as a perfect preamble to the present dissertation which seeks to find for itself a location within the discourse of colonial cultural studies and at the same time attempts to question the governing assumptions of this discursive field through a close textual analysis of Paul Scott's *The Raj Quartet* (1966-75). Unfortunately, the principal functional concepts of this discursive field still remain too embedded in a theoretical dualism of 'centre' and 'margin' as they continue to revolve around a master myth that proclaims the static lines of demarcation between 'imperial power' and 'disempowered cultures', between 'coloniser' and 'colonised'. But in the colonial context, 'domination' and

'subordination', I would argue, cannot be regarded as mutually exclusive terms; the ruling race is not a monolith of power, nor can the ruled be homogenised as a completely powerless entity.

The present study seeks to counter the continuing schizophrenia that plagues contemporary colonial studies through an exploration of the ghostly mobility with which power is transferred from the 'subjugating' to the 'subjugated' culture in the dynamics of the colonial exchange, and by demonstrating that the 'colonising presence' on the subcontinent, far from being a static entity, was a changing structure composed of diverse elements. The structures of gender and class create a number of sub-groups within the supposedly 'dominant group' and these sub-groups in their own turn are engaged in a contest for supremacy with one another, producing within the white race in the colony a complex social dynamics. In this dynamics the same sub-group may simultaneously occupy two contradictory subject positions. For example, a white woman in the colonial context oscillates between the dominant position of race and the subordinate one of gender, while an Englishman who does not belong to the upper class is torn between his inferior social standing in his own society and his superiority in relation to the coloured races and the fair sex. As gender and class differences cut across the



discursive field of colonialism, an attention to them in an analysis of the colonial situation helps in displacing the conventional binarism between the 'powerful' and the 'powerless', between 'centre' and 'margin'. My emphasis is not only on the co-existence, but also on the interlocking of these various structures of oppression -- an interlocking that further complicates the colonial situation.

Though the interlacing of racial and sexual politics has been on the agenda of feminist studies for quite some time<sup>3</sup>, employment of class differences as a theoretical and analytical category affecting the understanding of the 'imperial embrace' is still in its infancy with Kenneth Ballhatchet's *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj* (1978) and Gayatri Spivak's 'The Rani of Sirmur' (1985) being the only significant studies in this direction. When race, gender and class are seen as the variable determinants of the institution of colonisation, the shifting alignments of the different power structures come to the surface, revealing how each element is ceaselessly in conflict with another.

Though Bhupal Singh's *A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction* (1934) provides us with a useful historical account of English fiction written against the backdrop of the empire, the first significant study of colonial fiction that attempts to analyse the nature of race relations is Susan Howe's *Novels of Empire* (1948). But she deals only in part

with Anglo-Indian fiction, since the scope of her study is much wider, embracing not only English, but also French and German literatures as well as the imperial enterprise in Indo-China, Africa, Australia and New Zealand. As her canvas is too wide, resulting in large scale generalisations, her treatment of the subject tends to be superficial. Two valuable later studies by Western critics are *The British Image of India* by Allen J. Greenberger (1969) and Benita Parry's *Delusions and Discoveries* (1972). Both of them concentrate on English literature and adopt a thematic approach to the subject. The former employs a periodised approach ['Era of Confidence: 1880-1910; Era of Doubt: 1910-1935; Era of Melancholy: 1935-1960'<sup>4</sup>] while the latter prefers to lay stress mainly on modes of narration ['The Romancers' etc.] and a few major writers like Kipling, Edmund Candler, Edward Thompson and E. M. Forster are discussed in detail.<sup>5</sup> Greenberger and Parry confine their interest in showing the relationship of literature to a specific historical framework overlooking the importance of racial, sexual and class politics that moulded the history of that period. Even David Rubin, whose *After The Raj* (1986)<sup>6</sup> is a brilliant analysis of the literary merits of English colonial fiction written after the dissolution of the British Empire, does not come out of the parameters set by Greenberger and Parry.

During the last quarter of a century there has been an unprecedented upsurge of interest in this subject among Indian scholars as the academia in our country has been flooded with works attempting to interpret the true nature of the inter-racial encounter through an analysis of English colonial fiction. Such works include: *India in English Fiction* by K. Viswanathan (1971), *Novels on the Mutiny* by S. D. Singh (1973); *India in English Fiction* by D.K. Chakravorty (1978); *India: Myth and Reality : Images of India in the Fiction by English Writers* by A.S. Bhullar (1985); *The Sahibs and the Natives: A Study of Guilt and Pride in Anglo-Indian and Indo-Anglian Novels* by Gomathi Naryanan (1986); *The Raj in Fiction* by Udayan Misra (1987); *The Imperishable Empire: A Study of British Fiction on India* by Rashna B. Singh (1988); *A Passage to the Orient* by D. K. Chakravorty (1988); *Attitudes to Imperialism: Kipling, Forster and Paul Scott* by Sujit Bose (1990) and *Mirror on the Wall* by M.K. Naik (1991). Most of these critics have operated within the standard parameters of literary criticism, in the process rendering the Indo-British relationship rather unproblematic by ignoring the dynamic role played by the categories of gender and class in this interaction.

Sara Suleri's *The Rhetoric of English India* (1992)<sup>7</sup> and Jenny Sharpe's *Allegories of Empire* (1993)<sup>8</sup>, the two most

thought-provoking books in this area published recently, primarily concentrate upon the interweaving of racial and sexual politics, giving little importance to the third aspect of the triad -- the category of class. When Jenny Sharpe does touch upon the question of class, she dwells mainly on the class hierarchy as it exists in Britain and does not consider the sea changes that its transfer to India brings about.<sup>9</sup>

With a view to weaving in the three factors -- race, class and gender -- in the study of colonial politics, I propose to embark on a close textual reading of Paul Scott's *The Raj Quartet*. This long sequence of four novels, rather epic in dimension, is much more than a mere evocation of the last days of the empire since it provides us with a deep insight into the complex structuring of colonial authority in the subcontinent. "Scott", writes Tariq Ali, "was attempting an ambitious project: to dissect in every possible way, and inspect the insides of, the ruling class (or, to be more precise, the ruling race) of British India".<sup>10</sup> The white woman, the colonised man and the non-upper class British male nexus which is represented in the dramatic association of Daphne Manners, Hari Kumar and Ronald Merrick, furnishes the critic with adequate material to carry out a study of the working of the Raj in all its complexities.<sup>11</sup> But I do not seek to reduce colonialism to a

narrative of sexual and class differences, because gender and class themselves are overdetermined by other relations. In other words, the white woman and the English lower class are positioned by, but not reducible to, the racial hierarchy of colonialism. I propose to examine how the axes of race, class, and gender are "linked through their *differences*, through the dislocations between them, rather than through their similarity, correspondence or identity."<sup>12</sup>

Chapter Two, "The Imperial Posture and the Shrine of Darkness"<sup>13</sup>, which functions as a prelude to my examination of the sexual and class politics in so far as they affect racial differences, questions the imperial paradigm of 'domination' and 'subordination' by showing that the discursive transfer of power from the 'subjugating' to the 'subjugated' culture is an integral part of the colonial situation; the neurotic trauma resulting from the conqueror's baffling encounter with the 'inscrutability' of the subcontinent is an essential condition of the imperial psyche. In other words, this chapter seeks to explore the dynamics of power inherent in 'the heart of darkness' through an analysis of the different ways in which the 'colonised space' is figuratively represented in the narrative of Kipling, Forster and Scott. In the process of doing so, I shall also attempt to place Scott in his proper

lineage -- a lineage that begins with Kipling and passes through Forster.

*The Raj Quartet* should not be dismissed as a fictional story of the rape of an English woman by a gang of native hooligans, for in this long interlocking sequence of novels, Daphne Manners becomes the absent centre around which Scott's discourse of rape, race, class and gender revolves. Since the presence of the white female on the subcontinent not only stabilises the inherent contradictions of colonialism but also threatens to expose them, the third chapter, "The Myth of the Destructive Female"<sup>14</sup> attempts to reveal the weak links in the narrative of imperial legitimisation through a close reading of Scott's deployment of the English woman in his account of the East-West encounter. This chapter raises three fundamental questions - - to what extent is the woman implicated in the structure of colonialism? What line can be drawn between her collision with and confinement in the colonisation of the subcontinent? And does her rejection of this confinement inevitably lead to the subversion of the racial hierarchy? Finally, Chapter Four, "The Homo-Erotic Encounter and the Social Outsider" deals with how and to what effect the imperial ideology appropriates the parameters of class differences to perpetuate the racial hierarchy. The English upper class ceaselessly attempts to transfer the blame for

the excesses of colonialism to the periphery of Anglo-Indian society, thereby, implicating both the white woman and the non-upper class Englishman in the failure of the imperial project. In Scott's text, which is "a muted celebration of the imperial ideal rather than a self-conscious critique of a reality"<sup>13</sup>, the lower middle class, represented in the novel by Ronald Merrick, and the women, particularly Daphne and the missionaries, Miss Crane and Miss Batchelor, are scapegoated and held responsible for the shattering of what Francis Hutchins calls the "illusion of permanence"<sup>16</sup>. By placing the responsibility for the failure of an ideal whose potential was never fully realised, on the subordinate groups of his own community, Scott, unconsciously or consciously, undermines the imperial projection of the English society as a homogeneous entity, and endorses Gayatri Spivak's claim that "imperialism is not racial determinism in the last instance"<sup>15</sup>.

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17. Gayatri Chakrovarty Spivak, 'The Rani of Sirmur: an essay in reading the archives', *History and Theory*, 24, No.3, 1985, p.261.

## CHAPTER II

### "THE IMPERIAL POSTURE AND THE SHRINE OF DARKNESS"<sup>1</sup>

Many Englishmen in India must have had my experience. They have been puzzling over the problem, honestly anxiously to find out where the point of exasperation --no, more than exasperation, of severance--came, and to see if anything could be done. Then they have thought that they have found it -- yes, it was here, see! They have pushed hard, only to find that they have gone through a curtain painted like a wall, to find the real wall, granite and immovable, behind. <sup>2</sup>

-- *The Other Side of the Medal*, 1926

Edward Thompson, writing in 1926, uses a vivid trope for grappling with his experience of 'Indian intransigence'. His 'curtain'<sup>3</sup> hints less at the decipherability of the 'mysterious' subcontinent and more at the cultural ignorance of his own race and its inability to interpret India in cognisable terms. Both, the curtain-like veil and the granite wall concealed behind it suggest potential threats posed by an 'Indian alterity', and calls attention to the ghostly mobility with which power is transferred from the 'subjugating' to the 'subjugated' culture in the colonial encounter. It is this dynamics of power inherent in 'the heart of darkness' that this chapter seeks to explore through an analysis of the different ways in which the 'colonised space' (India) is figuratively represented in the

narratives of Kipling, Forster and Paul Scott.

Thompson's imaginative recreation of India is not very different from Kipling's<sup>4</sup> exotic *Cow's Mouth* (*The Naulakha*, 1892) that had forced Tarvin to retrace his steps back into the security of his own white identity, or the incomprehensible mystery of the Marabar caves (*A Passage to India*, 1924) that had struck panic in the mind of Adela Quested and made her run back into the protective arms of the Turtons and Burtons of Anglo-India. Also comparable is the later instance of the derelict Bibighar (*The Jewel in the Crown*, 1966)\* whose conflicting historicities baffle the unnamed narrator of the novel, compelling him to retreat from the ambiguity of oral legends into the relative certainty, of documented history. What all these fictional tropes spread over seven decades have in common is the coloniser's bafflement with India's 'inscrutable alterity' and his consequent withdrawal into the domain of 'familiar certitudes'.

"To state the case at its most naked", writes Sara Suleri, "the Indian subcontinent is not merely a geographic space upon which colonial rapacities have been enacted, but is furthermore that imaginative construction through which rapaciousness can worship its own misdeeds, thus making the

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\* From here on, the following abbreviations shall be used: JC for *The Jewel in the Crown*, TD for *The Day of the Scorpion*, TS for *The Towers of Silence* and DS for *A Division of the Spoils*.

subcontinent a tropological repository from which colonial and post-colonial imaginations have drawn -- and continue to draw -- their most basic figures for the anxiety of empire."<sup>5</sup> India in this way becomes what Edmund Burke calls 'colonialism's theatre of abuse'<sup>6</sup> where the drama of 'imperial complacency' unfolds itself through successive scenes of disempowerment that question the stability of the coloniser's position in the colonial encounter; a questioning that is implicit in the paralysing shock of Tarvin's encounter with the passive resistance of the ancient shrine, Adela's confrontation with the unfathomed emptiness of the caves and the anonymous narrator's inability to come to terms with the authentic history of "the place of the black". (JC, p. 178).

The dangerously simple moment of cultural collision"<sup>7</sup> suggests that the complex confrontation of two civilisations cannot be contained in a monolithic discourse of 'imperial complacency', for the story of colonialism is delicately poised on the 'cusp'<sup>8</sup> of the Eurocentric concept of white empowerment and the nuances of trauma resulting from the undermining of such an empowerment. Though Tarvin, Adela and the narrator of Scott's novel entered the subcontinent masquerading as all-powerful conquerors, their acute sense of bewilderment resulting from their subsequent experiences in India destabilises this posture, questioning the superiority of the white race in the dynamics of the 'colonial transaction'. In other words, the narratives of Kipling, Forster and Scott display an ambivalent relation to their 'subjugated territory' - an 'anxiety of empire', as each cultural articulation that they voice is neurotically conscious of a lurking horror posed by the inscrutability of the colonised space - 'the shrines of darkness'.

This 'anxiety of empire' constitutes the pivot around which Paul Scott's *The Raj Quartet* revolves. To Sarah Layton, one of Scott's female protagonists, it seemed "as if we have built a mansion without doors and windows, with no way in and no way out. All India lies on our doorsteps and cannot enter to warm us or be warmed. We live in holes and crevices of the crumbling stone, no longer sheltered by the carapace of our history which is leaving us behind." (*The Day*, p.476). Scott encapsulates "the dangerously simple moment of cultural collision" in the incident of the physical assault on a white woman against the background of the haunted ruins situated in the somewhat deserted Bibighar gardens, which is his metaphor for India. The familiar image of the cave used by Kipling and Forster is here discarded in favour of the ruins which, like the earlier sites, also lies outside the parameters of the socially defined space in British India. By pushing the subcontinent to the periphery of the 'civilised society' these novelists are transfiguring the colonised territory into a 'wild space' which, on the one hand, needs to be civilised and, on the other, is a forbidden land for the coloniser as it is fraught with 'unexpected' and 'unrecognisable' occurrences that cannot be easily explained away by the cognitive structures of a 'civilised society'. Furthermore, as language is a product of a civilised culture, the colonised space is also silenced (denied a history and a culture of its own) and rendered

passive. But the silence and complete passivity of India, instead of being her weakness, turns out to be her main source of strength --that which does not fight, does not yield. The total negativity of the 'shrines of darkness' -- the fictional theatrical space of Anglo-India -- defies the might of the coloniser through a passive resistance. It is this unconquered passivity of India that exposes the extreme vulnerability and precarious position of the ruling race and forces Kipling, Forster and Scott to adopt an ambivalent attitude towards 'the colonised space'.

A comparative study of Kipling, Forster and Scott reveals a number of interesting and significant shifts in the portrayal of this 'mysterious' subcontinent. In the case of Kipling, the colonial encounter is symbolically represented by Tarvin's sojourn into a cave-like ancient shrine called the Cow's Mouth. Though Forster persists with the cave imagery, the paralysing shock of the cultural contact in *A Passage To India* is experienced not by a white man but by a member of the 'fair sex' of his race. By the time we reach Scott, Forster's Marabar caves give way to the derelict ruins of the Bibighar garden. The post-colonial novelist however, does not make a complete departure from the Forsterian tradition when it comes to the question of the image of a white girl adventuring into the 'dark spaces' beyond the daylight regions of the 'world of reason'. This may be the only point of similarity between Forster and

Scott. Adela Quested who strays into the 'forbidden territory' in Forster's novel, is merely haunted by the nightmarish hallucinations of her honour being violated while Scott actually makes Daphne a victim of a brutal physical assault at the hands of the natives. The change in the setting (from the cave in Kipling and Forster to the ruins in Scott), the shift in gender (from Kipling's Tarvin to Forster's Adela and Scott's Daphne) and the difference in the consequences of stepping over the static lines of racial demarcation serve as nodal points for understanding certain basic anxieties about race, power and control over the 'irrational energies' of a culture never fully subjugated.

I

"What is this place called where the treasure is?" Jason asked.

"Coromandel !"

"Coromandel. Coromandel ! Where is it?"

"It's in India".<sup>9</sup>

-- *Coromandel !*, 1955

In the fourteenth century, Sir John Mandeville describes India as a land where diamonds, which are both male and female, grow on rocks of crystal and multiply, nourished by the dew from heaven.<sup>10</sup> From Chaucer's description of Emetreus, King of India, in his 'Knight's Tale',<sup>11</sup> to the white man's unabashed craving for gold in the stories of Kipling, it has mostly been the legendary



wealth of this 'rich ambrosial ocean isle' that has captivated the creative imagination of British artists endowing India with an exotic aura and transfiguring her into a land of romance -- 'a veritable El Dorado of the East'. A representative example of the coloniser's view of India as 'the jewel in the crown' is to be found in Hawkin's vision of the subcontinent in B. M. Croker's *The Pagoda Tree* (1919):

In India you are walking upon gold. There are enormous hordes in the country. The hiding and the hoarding has been going on for over two thousand years. The wealth of the East is absolutely untold -- such diamonds that will never see the light of day; stones that would put the Koh-i-Noor to shame; ropes of pearls; billions of gold and silver -- all concealed in the earth or in crumbling old fortresses.<sup>12</sup>

The image of India as the land of perpetual surplus triggered off the colonisation process by luring Britain into entering the subcontinent in the guise of a merchant with the sole objective of dispossessing the 'old crumbling fortresses' of their gold. As the hopes and aspirations (along with the fears and apprehensions) of a race provided the imaginative terrain on which the myth-making machinery of its culture operates, India began to function in the British imagination as "an area beyond the scope of cartography, a space most inviting to European wills to plunder and to the flamboyant entrepreneurship of such a figure as Robert Clive."<sup>13</sup> This aspect of the colonial nexus, i.e., the imperial desire to plunder and the

indomitable spirit of adventure finds its most crystallising fictional expression in Tarvin's quest for the fabulous Indian necklace, the Naulakha. The lyrical description of this precious ornament embodies within itself both the variegated beauty of the Indian landscape and the multifaceted character of this land of temptation:

It blazed with the dull red of the ruby, the angry green of the emerald, the cold blue of the sapphire and the white-hot glory of the diamond.<sup>14</sup>

...the necklace abashed them all... Forty nine stones, each perfect and flawless of its kind ...each worth a king's ransom or a queen's good name<sup>15</sup>.

Kipling's India undoubtedly falls into the category of 'the exotic'<sup>16</sup>, a category that makes the colony excessively available for traversal and description by the 'colonial eye'. (Though the exoticism of the 'colonised space' may hint at its impenetrability, it also suggests that the conqueror may chart a new route into it and describe it in accordance to his own whims and fancies as he has no precedent to follow that can curb his freedom of movement and his desire of describing the exotic lands). But a closer scrutiny of the lyrical description of 'the Naulakha' reveals that even the exotic is haunted by the central unavailability of India to the imperial gaze. The fabulous necklace is apparently at the mercy of Kipling's pen; he may describe it in whatever way he desires, but the process of description reveals that his pen is able to render tangible

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O, III, 3, N204, 10:9  
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only four ("It blazed with the dull red of the ruby, the angry green of the emerald, the cold blue of the sapphire and the white hot glory of the diamond") out of the forty nine precious stones that make up 'the Naulakha'. The failure of Kipling to describe in concrete terms the remaining forty-five priceless jewels calls for a recognition of the 'subjugated' culture's ability to split up the imperial inventory of domination. His attempt to make the Naulakha tangible to the coloniser's eye through the construction of a catalogue of the precious stones that make it up, is an articulation of 'the idiom of difficulty' embedded in an imperial discourse of complacency. Each one of the forty-nine stones may be 'perfect and flawless of its kind', but Kipling's catalogue is not, for he gives up his intentions of preparing a complete list midway, deriving satisfaction in pushing most of the precious stones into the anonymity of the obscure. The lucidity of such narratives depend more on the imperial myopia that plagues such acts of cultural descriptions than on the concreteness and completeness of the description itself. The nervous cultural blindness that forces Kipling to describe without describing, to mention without mentioning, is symptomatic of his progression from the parameters of imperial stability to the crumbling structures of imperial culpability. The category of 'the Indian exotic' which attempts to highlight the subcontinent's subjection to the complacent manipulation

of the imperial gaze is thus turned on its very head in order to represent India as the catalogue of the uncategorisable. In this way, the coloniser's desire to itemise and list all the properties of the object that he seeks to control and dominate fails to find fulfilment and his desire gives way to a traumatic sense of disappointment. Such a disappointment renders 'the Indian exotic' indistinguishable from the immediacy of colonial horror that leads to and is sealed in the hollowness of the Marabar caves, Kim's misread messages and the dubiety of the history of the Bibighar gardens.

Kipling disguises his subterranean understanding of the power inherent in an 'Indian alterity' through the camouflage of the rhetoric of numbers -- "Forty nine stones, each perfect and flawless of its kind". The act of colonial self protection that he engages in, invokes 'the exotic' to construct a fictive plot of imperial stability which is undermined by the very limitation of such a project. The employment of arithmetical figures serve to dissolve rather than consolidate the description of the necklace into a numbing sequence of forty nine unknown and unnamed priceless stones. The physical tangibility of an object defies the rationale of mathematics, for numbers function merely as "abstract ciphers of intangibility".<sup>17</sup> The coloniser's rational framework used to measure the exoticism of India is

repelled by the cultural shock implicit in the word 'abashed' in the above passage, diffused in the unquantifiability of 'a king's ransom' and dissolved in the vagueness of 'a queen's good name'. The 'uncatalogued horrors' of the Indian exotic returns with an even more debilitating sense of failure in Forster's representation of the Marabar Caves:

The caves are readily described. A tunnel eight feet long, five feet high, three feet wide, leads to a circular chamber about twenty feet in diameter. This arrangement occurs again and again throughout the group of hills, and this is all, this a Marabar cave. Having seen one such cave, having seen two, having seen three, four, fourteen, twenty-four, the visitor returns to Chandrapore uncertain whether he has had an interesting experience or a dull one or any experience at all. He finds it difficult to discuss the caves, or to keep them apart in his mind...Nothing, nothing attaches to them, and their reputation -- for they have one -- does not depend on human speech.<sup>18</sup>

The easy chartability of the Marabar caves is swallowed by the confusion of a mathematical geography that sends chronology and connection into a total disarray rendering the description of the caves uncanny.<sup>19</sup> Presence yields to absence just as the moveable silk-like curtain of Thompson gives way to the immovable granite wall behind:

Nothing is inside them, they were sealed up before the creation of pestilence or treasure; if mankind grew curious and excavated, nothing, nothing would be added to the sum of good or evil.<sup>20</sup>

Forster's inability to render the Marabar caves tangible to the 'imperial eye' is symptomatic of a cultural ignorance that is also discernable in Paul Scott. But the manifestation of Scott's neurotic trauma stemming from an obsessive apprehension of colonial guilt is not atrophied in the futility of topographical description. It rather flows nervously into the contested terrain of history with the recognition of the impropriety of denying India a dynamic past. As conflicting myths about the origin of the Bibighar plague the air, the endless contradicting details ensure that the authentic history of "the place of the black" (*JC*, p.178) remains shrouded in a mystery inaccessible to the narcissistic manipulation of the imperial gaze. The catalogues of the precious stones, the physical dimensions of the Marabar Caves and the contesting histories of the Bibighar are replete with pieces of information that lead to the vision of the obscure, making colonial description possible through the very depiction of its difficulty. The catalogue, which makes the subjugated culture both tangible and resistant to cognition, shrinks into the disturbing negativity of the Marabar Caves. The Indian exotic is thus "at its most empty at the very point when it is most

replete, dissolving the stability of facts and figures into hieroglyphs that signify only the coloniser's pained confrontation with an object to which his cultural and interpretative tools must be inadequate".<sup>21</sup> The potentially tragic failure of the chroniclers of the Raj to come to grips with the subcontinent transforms Anglo-India into a complex narrative space that calls for the "disempowerment of description that seizes colonial discourse even as it continues to subscribe to the possibility of imperial inventories".<sup>22</sup>

## II

"Because they are not like us," she answered.... "If they were clever, if they were wise, what could we do for them? It is because they are lost, stumbling, foolish creatures that they need us."<sup>23</sup>

-- *The Naulakha*, 1892

"In the eyes of the European civilization", writes Ashis Nandy, "the colonisers were not a group of self-seeking, rapacious, ethnocentric vandals and self-chosen carriers of a cultural pathology, but ill-intentioned, flawed instruments of history, who unconsciously worked for the upliftment of the underprivileged of the world."<sup>24</sup> Even when James Mill confesses that there is an opportunity in India to which the history of the world presents not a parallel,<sup>25</sup> he is in effect establishing a political

paradigm in which the colonial experience is delicately placed in the mould of a doctrine of social progress. His *History of British India* (1858) is a method of legitimising the imperial designs of his country through a valorisation of the civic energy with which the coloniser claims to bring modernity to the primitivism of a Caliban's land. In keeping with such imperial designs the British understanding of the dynamics of Indian culture and civilisation quickly atrophied into a static and distrustful interpretation of India as the locus of all things ancient. The projection of the notion of India's perpetual arrest in pre-history finds its literary corollary in the image of the cave which enshrines in its ultimate nada the 'debilitating senility' and the retrograde elements of a subjugated culture fossilised in time. Furthermore, the cave also hints at the imprisoned and confined condition of the colonised and at the femininity of his culture.<sup>26</sup> It also imparts a moral strength to the process of colonisation as the cave, on another level, is an objective image of hell.<sup>27</sup> Thus, this symbol (cave) is the most appropriate for the propagation of the imperial ideology as it emphasises and projects the cultural, political and moral superiority of the coloniser as against the primitivism, enslaved state and dark ways of the 'subjugated culture'.

European culture had marginalised childhood, old age, femininity and the coloured races in its socio-economic and



ethical discourses leaving the white male adult as the only "reasonable approximation of a perfect human being".<sup>28</sup> The image of the white man entering the cave is thus the most apt fictional rendering of Mill's colonial paradigm and the so-called benevolence of British imperialism -- the white man Tarvin enters the cave to dispel its darkness. It is this politics of sympathy that controls and moulds the imperial narratives of domination.

There is however a clear line of demarcation between cultural and imperial sympathy as the two are mutually exclusive terms. Cultural sympathy is the manifestation of an admiration for another culture that arouses an uncontrollable sense of curiosity in the all-powerful beholder, thereby fracturing his stability -- Adela's and Daphne's interest in India is a case in point. Imperial sympathy, on the other hand, attempts to reinforce the power of the coloniser by obliterating the very identity of the subjugated culture so that he may act as a sympathetic friend who is genuinely concerned about the sordid plight of his 'helpless victim'. But imperial sympathy which attempts to reverse the process of the destabilisation of the coloniser, implicit in cultural sympathy, succeeds only in highlighting his vulnerable position that manifests itself in the indifference and ignorance that he displays towards the colonised culture. The nervous cultural blindness of the English race inherent in imperial sympathy is personified in

Thomas Babington Macaulay who fails to recognise the dynamic vitality of indigenous Indian languages and modes of learning :

I have no knowledge of either Sanscrit or Arabic -- But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value... I am quite ready to take the Oriental learning at the valuation of the Orientalists themselves. I have never found one of them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.<sup>29</sup>

The dynamics of imperial sympathy is one of alienation rather than association; it is an outright rejection of the temptation to enter the obscure domain of the colonised, preferring to remain within the security of its own rational parameters. The complete imperviousness that Macaulay reveals to the possibility of cultural sympathy is an act of cultural aggression underlying which there lurks an overdetermined fear of the novelty of the Indian experience. The potential horror posed by the possibility of a callous misreading of the subcontinent's culture is neatly interwoven with an exposition of the epistemological limitation of European inventory. Words denoting willingness like 'ready' in Macaulay's statement depict the unassailable position of the coloniser but his power crumbles under the weight of the necessity of an intermediary (the Orientalists themselves) who can render the Indian reality tangible to

the 'colonial eye'. The paralysing awareness of the non-availability of adequate deciphering instruments forces Macaulay to adopt an attitude of indifference born not out of choice but out of compulsion, thereby adding to the British image of India the new category of 'the untouchable'. India should be left untouched lest the purity of the white race should be threatened and contaminated by the retrograde aspects of a senile culture. The obsessive apprehension of colonial culpability that resides at the heart of the subcontinent's untouchability is disguised in a narrative of a rather frail imperial logic : as India is too old to be rational, the coloniser need waste no time in decoding the cultural and social structures of the colony. Even Tarvin's boundless enthusiasm, which is an illustration of Burke's 'the desperate boldness of a few young men'<sup>30</sup> is propelled, not by his firm conviction in the virtues of his own civilization, but by a feeling of indifference generated by the agonising physical horrors that Tarvin experienced as a result of his encounter with the green emerald-eyed alligator -- the symbol of the 'interminable ancient India':<sup>31</sup>

This I saw when the rites were done,  
And the lamps were dead and the Gods alone,  
And the gray snake coiled on the altar stone,  
Ere I fled from the fear that I could not see,  
And the Gods of the East made mouths at me.<sup>32</sup>

The unsettling cultural horror of Macaulay's paradigm

is translated into the illusory negativity of the 'shrines of darkness' and into the faceless natives of Daphne's nightmare. By depriving the colony of any form of identity the imperial ideology seeks to enlist its subordination. The darkness and emptiness of the colonised space provides the colonizer with an open invitation to thrust his artillery of inventory upon the total blankness of the subcontinent. But the complete absence of light and tangible forms also thwarts the imperial gaze; 'the colonial eye' fails to locate the locus of the darkness and emptiness it seeks to enslave and its complacent glance begins to glide nervously without knowing where to fix its gaze. In this way, the imperial rhetoric of darkness and obscurity unfolds itself beyond the boundaries of conceptual stability, implying the complete absence of colonial control over its own narrative of domination. In Macaulay's incipient fear of an Indian alterity, there is a prophetic anticipation of the catastrophic consequences of the unwarranted cultural sympathy of Adela Quested and Mrs Moore and Daphne's childish curiosity. To touch India means to release her from colonial confinement, to open the forbidden Pandora's box. The mere act of trespassing into 'the forbidden territory' enables the echo of the Marabar cave to tumble out of their limited parameters to corrode the life outside, and in the process destroy the psychological stability of Mrs Moore, while the unfortunate happenings of the Bibighar allow

India's negativity to grow out of its confines and engulf the entire theatrical space of Anglo-India.

Macaulay's fears of the subcontinent's power to destabilise the coloniser, returns in the Major's speech in Ruth Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust* (1975) :

...one has to be very determined to withstand -- to stand upto -- India. And the most vulnerable... are always those who love her best. There are many ways of loving India, many things to love her for -- the scenery, the history, the poetry, the music, and indeed the physical beauty of her men and women - but all...are dangerous for the European who allows himself to love too much. India always...finds the weak spot and presses on it.<sup>33</sup>

It is such a horror that haunts Macaulay and he, therefore, never attempts to get involved with the indigenous culture of India -- though he can never stop talking about the sub continent, that is to say, he can never stop seeing it as an alien adversary, an inhuman abstraction that effectively precludes any general understanding of, and love for its culture.

The movement from imperial sympathy to cultural sympathy, from indifference to curiosity maps the evolution and growth of colonial fiction about India (from Kipling through Forster to Scott) and it also unblinkingly witnesses the nervous surfacing of the traumatic manifestation of the 'anxiety of empire'. The deceptive veil of the decadent old

age and impotent passivity of India is torn aside as Daphne enters the sinister darkness of the derelict Bibighar to encounter the youthful drive and masculine energy of the subcontinent in Hari and her assailants. The nightmarish sexual violation of a white woman that fails to take place in the emptiness of the Marabar caves materialises against the background of the haunted ruins. Daphne enters into a willing act of consummation with Hari -- the wonderful product of the genius of her own race. But the colonial space is fraught with 'unexpected' and 'unrecognised' horrors. The blissful union between the coloniser (Daphne) and the refined creation of colonial education (Hari) is brutally unsettled by the sudden and beastly emergence of the potentially threatening indigenous cultural and social structures of India, forcing Daphne to recognise the true nature of the colonial encounter:

Perhaps there was love. Oh, somewhere in the past, and now, and in the future, love as there was between me and Hari. But the spoilers are always there, aren't they?

(*JC*, p.554)

'The spoilers'-- the unknown natives -- forcefully thrust themselves upon her, startling and stunning both Daphne and Hari into an inexplicable fit of silence. The rape of a white woman at the hands of the native suggests that the colonised space (India) is not a passive abstract entity, nor is it a sort of dummy set up to confirm the

racial superiority of the white; it is rather a living and dynamic force that challenges and even messes with the very identity of the coloniser.

Scott demonstrates his intuitive understanding of the complex dynamics of the cultural exchange inherent in a colonial encounter by opting for the menacing ruins<sup>34</sup> rather than the total negativity of the cave. Where empire has gained, it must also lose. The coloniser may have brought the figure of Christ to the subcontinent but the Indian students of Barbara Batchelor colour His face with the blue of Krishna instead of the usual angelic white associated with the face of Christ. According to Wilfred Stone, "The birth of Sri Krishna is a kind of Hindu equivalent to the birth of Jesus; but the celebrations commemorating it are such a riot of noise and colour and horseplay that those who are accustomed to the relatively sedate Western Christmas might be shocked by its seeming irreverence and vulgarity".<sup>35</sup> Thus the image of Christ with a blue face is symptomatic of the threat posed by Indian civilisation to the English culture. The malignant smile of the sleeping Vishnu<sup>36</sup> and the chaotic movement concealed behind the static frieze of Nataraja's dance of destruction<sup>37</sup>, all question the stability and dominant position of the coloniser, and call for an express recognition of the ghostly mobility with which power is transferred from the 'subjugating' to the 'subjugated

culture' in the dynamics of colonial exchange. Scott emblematises the extreme vulnerability of the coloniser in the image of the white girl running in the darkness<sup>38</sup> which is placed like strategic pillars both at the beginning and the end of *The Raj Quartet*:

Imagine, then, a flat landscape, dark for the moment, but even so conveying to a girl running in the still deeper shadow cast by the wall of the Bibighar Gardens an idea of immensity, of distance,....

( *JC*, p.9)

In this way, the colonial space ceases to be Mabel's 'rose garden' where only the seeds sown by the imperial hand sprout and blossom into beautiful flowers; and becomes Mildred's 'tennis court' -- the historical battleground where contesting and disparate cultures are engaged in a never-ending titanic confrontation. The coloniser must recognise the potential ferocity of the serves and returns of the colonised, otherwise he will be left paralysed and helplessly stranded on the baseline of history.

### III

They seized her body and possessed her, but it was a possession of violence. They did not know her or try to know her. They never looked into her eyes, for theirs were averted and hers cast down through shame and humiliation.<sup>39</sup>

*Towards Freedom : The Autobiography  
of Jawaharlal Nehru, 1967*



Even the anti-imperialist rhetoric of Nehru (the reference is to the passage quoted above) depicts the dynamics of the colonial cultural encounter in terms of rape, rendering the colonial territory co-terminous with female geography. The category of the 'Indian exotic', which makes the colony excessively available for traversal (both in terms of plundering its wealth and as an object to be described) by the coloniser, also attempts to delineate the masculine strength of the coloniser against the curious attraction of the feminine subcontinent. In other words, the imperial project is metaphorically imaged in terms of male coloniser and female colonised. The complacent projection of the extreme vulnerability of the colonial space in all its female manifestations however collapses into a neurotic articulation of 'the anxiety of empire'. The following passage from Maud Diver's *Desmond's Daughter* (1916) hints at the extreme fragility of the male coloniser's position when he encounters the half-concealed feminine attraction of India :

India may truly be said to rank with Italy as a Woman-country loved of male lands and exercising the same irresistible magnetism, the same dominion over the hearts of men. India, even to her intimates, seems still a veiled mystery aloof yet alluring, like one of her own purdah princesses.<sup>40</sup>

The ideological recourse to the language of sexual promise undermines the power of the coloniser by pushing him

to the instability of the margins as India remains veiled in a female mystery; the coloniser is unsettled by an uncontrollable desire to tear apart the veil that hides India, but as the analysis of Kipling's lyrical passage describing 'the naulakha' suggests, such a desire, failing to find fulfilment, gives way to despair and frustration. The category of femininity (beauty), which also decentres the imperial gaze in the same manner as the narrative of darkness does, combines with the rhetoric of obscurity to make the colonial voice a victim of its own fractured discourse of domination; the femininity of the subcontinent furthermore, encapsulates the potential threat that an Indian woman poses to the homo-social solidarity of the subjugating culture. The white woman steps into the colonial territory as a safeguard against the dangers posed by the Eastern woman, only to bring about an intensification of the threat presented by the subjugated culture as she becomes the embodiment of all that the Englishman must protect. The domesticity of her presence further suggests how much protection is required to keep her segregated from native tradition.<sup>41</sup> The unwarranted entry of Adela Quested and Daphne Manners into the menacing terrain of 'the shrines of darkness' is symptomatic of this nervous ventriloquisation of imperial culpability that reverses the hitherto fossilised paradigm of colonial rape. "The Anglo-Indian psyche", writes M. K. Naik, "is, perhaps unconsciously

inclined to regard the rape of a white woman by a native as a kind of symbolic atonement by sexual desecration, for the white man's political rape of India..."<sup>42</sup>

But interestingly enough, both *A Passage to India* and *The Raj Quartet* seek to construct and simultaneously dismantle colonialism's master narrative of sexual violation by evincing an intuitive understanding of the phenomena of cultural exchange as a dialogue between competing male anxieties, thereby endowing colonial discourse with a homo-erotic decorum.<sup>43</sup> The body of the female protagonist of both the novels is transfigured into a contested terrain upon which the masculinity of the two cultures enact the drama of their conflicting loyalties and envies. Thus, by rendering femininity of the subjugating and subjugated cultures redundant, Forster and Scott give a figurative articulation to the bewildering suspension of power embodied in the hysteria and cultural terror of the homo-erotic confrontation of the races implicit in Kipling's "Ballad of East and West":

But there is neither East nor West, Border,  
nor Breed, nor Birth,  
When two strong men stand face to face,  
though they come from the ends of the earth!

The grievous crime that a coloniser has committed is, therefore, not the penetration and control of a female colonised space but it is rather the emasculation of the

subcontinent<sup>44</sup> that he has brought about by wrongly projecting the colonial encounter in terms of a metaphorical heterosexuality. The Bibighar, "the place of the black" which may literally mean the 'house of the women' has no woman inhabitant. Instead of finding the femininity of India in the Gardens, Daphne encounters the masculine energy of the colonised space in the persons of Hari and her assailants. In her journal, Daphne hints at the true nature of the coloniser's violation of India:

The whole bloody affair of us in India... was based on violation.... What happens when you unsex a nation, treat it like a nation of eunuchs? Because that's what we've done, isn't it?

(JC, p.512)

## REFERENCES

1. Stanley Cooperman 'The Imperial Posture and the Shrine of Darkness : Kipling's "The Naulakha" and E.M. Forster's "A Passage to India"' in *English Literature in Transition* Vol. VI, No.1, 1963, p.9.
2. Edward Thompson, *The Other Side of the Medal*. Quoted in Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992), p.6.
3. The curtain, behind which is concealed a granite and immovable wall, is a recurrent trope that Thompson uses in his writings to grapple with his experience of Indian intransigence. For example, the words of Gregory (Atonement), the principal of a missionary college, illustrates Thompson's agonized and frustrated hope of knowing India : "Sarat babu, help me I'm frankly puzzled. All these years I've been trying to get at what you people really do think and feel. I've read your literature, I've studied your religion... you said I didn't understand -- that I couldn't understand ...I really have thought sometimes that I've got through to what Indians were thinking -- and then I've pushed hard, and it's been like going through a curtain and finding a solid wall behind." Quoted in Benita Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries* (Allen Lane The Penguin Press, London, 1972), p.202.
4. Though I am aware that Rudyard Kipling and Wolcott Balestier joined hands in writing *The Naulakha*, I tend to agree with Benita Parry that the India of this novel is Kipling's creation -- see Benita Parry, *op. cit.*, footnote, p.225. Therefore, here onwards I shall refer to the Cow's Mouth as Kipling's and not Kipling and Balestier's.
5. Sara Suleri, *op. cit.*, pp 4-5.
6. *ibid.*, p.7.
7. *ibid.*, p.1  
Sara Suleri uses the phrase 'the dangerously simple moment of cultural collision' to describe Naboth's encounter with the natives (Kipling, "Naboth", 1886). Naboth, the coloniser, carelessly throws a coin to the native beggar who in turn initiates an act of counter colonialism by establishing a confectionary stall in the coloniser's garden. This stall quickly grows into a number of shops and finally into a brothel. This

reversal of roles questions the supremacy of Naboth and depicts the vulnerability of the coloniser in the colonial encounter.

8. *ibid.*
9. John Masters, *Coromandel!*. Quoted in David Rubin, *After the Raj* (University Press of New England, Hanover and London, 1986), p.25.
10. M.K. Naik presents an exhaustive list of the literary allusions to India that the British writers have made down the ages in *Mirror on the Wall* (Sterling, New Delhi, 1991), p.9.
11. *ibid.*  
"In his 'Knight's Tale', Chaucer describes Emetreus, 'Kyng of Inde' as 'covered in cloth of goold' with a 'sadel...abrend goold, neue yebete' and with a mantle 'bretful of rubyes, as fyr sparklynge'."
12. B.M. Croker, *The Pagoda Tree* (1919). Quoted in M.K. Naik, *op. cit.*, p.14.
13. Sara Suleri, *op. cit.*, p.26.
14. Rudyard Kipling and Wolcott Balestier, *The Naulakha* (Macmillan, London, 1892), p.208.
15. *ibid.*, pp.251-252.
16. I am positing the category of the Indian exotic (the exotic) to facilitate my analysis of the colonial encounter. The Indian exotic is a category that portrays India as a land of romance and virgin space most inviting to the British will to plunder and conquer. It also entails that the land as it is still to be conquered, possessed and given definite shape may be described in whatever way the conqueror desires.
17. Sara Suleri, *op. cit.*, p.29.
18. E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India* (Penguin, London, 1924 reprint 1952), p.124.
19. Sara Suleri, *op. cit.*, p.145.
20. E.M. Forster, *op. cit.*, p.125.
21. Sara Suleri, *op. cit.*, p.31.
22. *ibid.*

23. Rudyard Kipling and Wolcott Balestier, *op. cit.*, p.121.
24. Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy* (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1983), p.14.
25. M.K. Naik, *op. cit.*, p.8.
26. J.E. Giriot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London and Henley, 1962), p.40.  
 "Broadly speaking, its meaning is probably confined to that of the general symbolism of containment, of the enclosed or the concealed... caves, with their darkness are womb symbols."
27. *ibid.*  
 "It appears fairly often in emblematic and mythological iconography as the forebears or archetypes, becoming therefore an objective image of Hades.... That the German Hohle (cave) and Holle (hell) are related is not without significance."
28. Ashis Nandy, *op. cit.*, p.16.  
 Nandy in his book shows how European culture had systematically marginalised childhood in its various socio-economic and ethical discourses:  
 "Philippe Aires argues that the modern concept of childhood is a product of seventeenth century Europe... The new concept of childhood bore a direct relationship to the doctrine of progress now regnant in the West. Childhood now no longer seemed only a happy, blissful prototype of beatific angels, as it has in the peasant cultures of Europe only a century earlier. It increasingly looked like a blank slate on which adults must write their moral codes -- an inferior version of maturity, less productive and ethical, and badly contaminated by the playful, irresponsible and spontaneous aspects of human nature ... it became the responsibility of the adult to 'save' the child from a state of unrepentant, reprobate sinfulness through proper socialization, and help the child grow towards a Calvinist ideal of adulthood and maturity." (pp.14-15).  
 Old age had been pushed to the margin of European culture in a similar fashion. "Modern Europe had delegitimized not merely femininity and childhood but also old age. Judaeo-Christianity always had an element which saw ageing as a natural unfolding and result of man's essential sinfulness. The decomposition of the human body was seen as only an indicator of the evil in the one degenerating : according to the old South European saying, till youth a person looked the way God made him; after that he looked the way he really

was... The elderly ...were now increasingly seen as socially irrelevant because of their low physical power and because their social productivity and cultural role could not be easily quantified" (pp. 16-17)  
 As the ways in which femininity and the coloured races had been marginalised has become common knowledge, I shall not refer to any source.

29. Macaulay's "Minute on Indian Education", Quoted in Sara Suleri, *op. cit.*, p.33.
30. Sara Suleri, *op. cit.*, p.32.
31. Benita Parry, *op. cit.*, p.227.
32. Rudyard Kipling and Wolcott Balestier, *op. cit.*, p.125.
33. Ruth Jhabvala, *Heat and Dust*. Quoted in David Robin, *op. cit.*, pp.64-65.
34. J.E. Girtler, *op. cit.*, "The symbolic sense of ruins is self-evident and derived directly from the literal sense: they signify desolation and life defunct. They are tantamount to sentiments, ideas or bonds which are no longer animated by the breath of life but which nevertheless persist shorn of any use or function relevant to thought and existence, but saturated with the past and redolent with a sense of the destruction of its reality wrought by the passage of time. Ruins are symbolically equivalent to biological mutilation." p.276.
35. Wilfred Stone, *The Cave and the Mountain* (Oxford University Press, California, 1966) p.333.
36. Veronica Ions, *Indian Mythology, Library of the World Myths and Legends*, - [The Standard Literature Co. (P) Ltd., India, 1967], p.46.  

"Vishnu is the cosmic ocean, Nara, which spread everywhere before the creation of the universe, but is also called Narayan, 'moving in the waters'; in this character he is represented in a human form, sleeping on the coiled serpent -- Shesha, or Ananta, and floating on the waters. Brahma is sometimes said to have arisen from a lotus growing from his navel as he slept thus. After each destruction of the universe Vishnu resumes this posture."
37. (a) *ibid.*, "Lord of the Dance, dancing on the body of a dwarf demon. His victory over the spirit of evil is of cosmic significance, for the destruction of



evil presages re-creation and the establishment of divine order. The surrounding halo both honours Shiva and represents the cycle of creation, destruction and rebirth."

- (b) Benita Parry, *op. cit.*, footnote, p.58. "Shiva contains and enacts all possible aspects of life and his dance is a marvellous blending of opposites. The dance, like life itself, is a mixture of the terrific and the auspicious, a juxtaposition and unification of destruction, death and vital triumph ...It is understood as expressive of the Divine, which in its totality comprises all the goods and evils, beauties and horrors, joys and agonies, of our phenomenal life."
38. Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire* [University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993], p.152. She demonstrates how the image of the girl running in darkness is the undermining of the stable position of the queen in the picture 'the Jewel in her Crown'.
39. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Towards Freedom*. Quoted in Sara Suleri, *op. cit.*, p.17.
40. Maud Diver, *Desmond's Daughter*. Quoted in M.K. Naik, *op. cit.*, p.16.
41. Kenneth Balihatchet, *Race, Sex And Class Under The Raj* [Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1979].
42. M.K. Naik, *op. cit.*, p.44.
43. Sara Suleri, *op. cit.*, pp.132-148.
44. Jenny Sharpe, *op. cit.*, p.155.

### CHAPTER III

#### "THE MYTH OF

#### THE

#### DESTRUCTIVE FEMALE"<sup>1</sup>

Barred from the noble work of the civilizing project, the English woman enters a colonial iconography of martyrdom only in the capacity of victim. Unlike her male counterpart, it is her brutalized corpse rather than her body of good deeds that is of significance to the moral mission of colonialism<sup>2</sup>.

- *Allegories of Empire*, 1993

"No other country", writes V.S. Naipaul, "was more fitted to welcome a conqueror; no other conqueror was more welcome than the British, "what went wrong? Some say the Mutiny; some say the arrival in India afterwards of white women. It is possible."<sup>3</sup> Even Kipling seems to subscribe to this point of view as in his numerous novels and short stories, he demonstrates that the presence of the English women in India is greatly disturbing as she is a powerful distraction to the Englishmen who placed their work -- the white man's burden in India -- above all else, and in this way she acts as a hindrance in the administration of the Raj. "The English wife constitutes a kind of menace", argues John McBratney in his recent reading of Kipling, "for she can,

and in Kipling's eyes, often does domesticate the energies better spent on government..."<sup>4</sup> The placing of the blame on the white woman for the dark side of imperialism belongs to what Margaret Strobel terms as "the myth of the destructive female" which posits the existence of an idyllic past of racial mixing prior to the entrance of the English woman into the colonial stage. Although such a perfect camaraderie between the two races did not exist as the advocates of this myth seem to suggest, there are nevertheless historical reasons for associating the intensification of racial segregation with the arrival of the white woman in India. As Kenneth Ballhatchet points out, "In various ways their presence seems to have widened the distance between the ruling race and the people... As wives they hastened the disappearance of the Indian mistress. As hostesses they rostered the development of exclusive social groups in every civil station. As women they were thought by Englishmen to be in need of protection from lascivious Indians."<sup>5</sup> Paul Scott seems to conform to and give a fresh lease of life to this myth in this age of Raj revivalism. This study of the construction of white woman in Paul Scott's *The Raj Quartet* attempts to demonstrate how in his muted celebration of an imperial ideal whose potential was never fully realised, Scott inscribes the English woman into the narrative of his texts as a scapegoat for the shattering of what Francis

Hutchins calls "the illusion of permanence".<sup>6</sup>

Any significant discussion of the white woman in colonial texts is continuously confronted with three fundamental questions: to what extent is the English woman implicated in the structures of colonialism? What line can be drawn between her collision with and confinement in the colonisation of the subcontinent? And does her rejection of this confinement inevitably lead to the subversion of the racial hierarchy?

The English woman, oscillating between the dominant position of race and the subordinate position of gender, had practically no access to colonial authority as her existence was confined and restricted to the narrow space between the walls of her Anglo-Indian household. Her domestic confinement was considered to be a sign of the racial and moral superiority of the ruling race, while her home became a place of racial purity guarded by the 'colonial housewife'. Her enclosed space was strategically positioned in an imperial ideology that aimed at propagating the racial hierarchy. But in her anxiety to maintain the purity of her home the English housewife, in a sense, precipitated the demise of the empire because by insisting on racial segregation she intensified the gulf that existed between the 'subjugating' and 'subjugated' cultures. In other words she was able to ensure the sanctity of her domestic

enclosure but only at a very heavy indirect price -- the eventual dissolution of the empire.

The English woman was however not only the custodian of the moral values of her race; she was also the repository of white culture and as such it was essential to keep her segregated from the polluting influence of the native traditions. Dwelling thus, in a protection hysterically conscious of how much protection was necessary to ensure the sanctity and superiority of the ruling race, the 'Anglo-Indian woman' was not supposed to evince even the most harmless trace of cultural sympathy; nor was she allowed to nurse a desire of stepping out of her domestic confines to know and understand the subcontinent and to foster a friendly and cordial relation with the local people.

Any act in this direction was censured by the Anglo-Indian community for its potentially disruptive effect on British solidarity. The exclusive nature of the white rulers depended on maintaining the rigid line of demarcation between them and those they ruled. The unwarranted and precarious entry of Adela Quested (*A Passage to India*) and Daphne Manner (*The Jewel in the Crown*) into the 'dark spaces' lying beyond the socially defined sphere of their domestic enclosures are cases in point.

Thus whatever the white woman did, whether she stayed at home and developed a snobbish repulsion for everything

native or whether she stepped out of her protected enclosure to establish ties of inter-racial friendship, she was always condemned, becoming "a symbolic casualty to the deranging costs of colonial power."<sup>7</sup> At once the remedy and the curse that ensures and threatens racial segregation, the English woman in India was a precariously positioned victim. Any meaningful discussion of the construction of the English woman in colonial texts should take into account this complex socio-cultural aspect of colonial life and place her in it.

## I

Windows were barred lest the servants should see their memsahibs acting and the heat was consequently immense.<sup>8</sup>

- *A Passage to India*, 1924

Both Adela Quested and Daphne Manners break the protective enclosures of their domestic confines and stray into 'the forbidden territory' beyond the parameters of the socially defined space in Anglo-India, creating a crisis in colonial authority. Their unwarranted act of touching India invites the ritualized condemnation from the members of their community underlying which there lurks a neurotic apprehension of the extreme vulnerability and precarious position of the ruling race. To enter India is as grievous a crime as opening the forbidden Pandora's box. Adela's

conduct enables the echo of the Marabar caves to tumble out of its confined space to corrode the lives of the inhabitants of Chandrapore while the unfortunate happenings of Bibighar allow India's negativity to grow out of its limited parameters and engulf the entire theatrical space of Anglo-India.

The nightmarish hallucination of being raped (Adela) and the actual incident of a sexual assault (Daphne) which constitute the pivotal incidents of the respective novels, are portrayed as the natural culmination of an act of female disobedience -- the white woman's desire to defy the colonial paradigm of domesticity and transgress the static lines of racial segregation. By stepping into what Ronald Merrick calls "the other side of the line" (*The Day*, p.260), Adela and Daphne evince traces of an incipient rebellion. But the important question is whether these rebellions are retrogressive or progressive, reactionary or radical? Neither Forster nor Scott allow their respective female protagonists to subvert the colonial hierarchy as they are reinscribed within the very structure they had attempted to disrupt. Adela is quickly made to realise her mistake and forced to run back into the protective arms of the Turtons and Burtons of Anglo-India. In this way *A Passage to India*, after initial doubts, realigns itself with the imperial institution of operation. Similarly, by plotting Daphne's

movements from one side of the cultural divide to the other, *The Jewel in the Crown* does not dismantle the ideal of domesticity; it rather brings to a sharp focus the sinister consequences of violating this norm. In other words, these incidents in *A Passage to India* and *The Jewel in the Crown* are the kind of ritual safety valves which, far from undermining the existing order, actually reinforce it.

The opening lines of Scott's *Quartet* -- "This is a story of a rape" (*JC*, p.9) -- sets the tone for the events that follow. At the very outset of the story, the reader is made aware that Daphne's twin rejection of the domestic ideal and the racial hierarchy will acquire the dimensions of a Shakespearean tragedy. Daphne's fascination for Hari turns out to be "an attraction to danger" (*JC*, p.477) and her movement away from the security of the Anglo-Indian household becomes the scenario in which she is made an object of a native attack. The reader is made to read Miss Manners' act of 'disobedience' with the foreknowledge of its sinister consequences, nipping in the bud any contemplation a white female reader may have of emulating her. Furthermore, the reader is made to see in every step that Daphne takes, the seeds of her misfortune. She (Daphne) becomes an example not to be followed, an example that educates the female reader to remain within the safety of her domestic enclosure, an example of how power constructs



its own resistance and then contains it.

The white woman-brown man association throws the entire colonial system into disarray displacing the binarisms of the 'coloniser' and 'colonised', 'self' and 'other', 'oppressor' and 'oppressed', 'west' and 'east', and creating panic in the entire English community:

I felt as if they saw my affair with Hari as the logical but terrifying end of the attempt they had all made to break out of their separate little groups and learn how to live together terrifying because even they couldn't face with equanimity the breaking of the most fundamental law of all that although a white man could make love to a black girl, the black man and white girl association was still taboo.

(*JC*, pp.454-455)

The picture of Daphne and Hari coming together threatens to undermine white manhood and the empire at a stroke. Errol Lawrence rightly points out that the mating of a white woman and a black man was considered fatal as it eroded the white man's "territory" and allowed for the possibility of its "invasion".<sup>9</sup>

Daphne's act of transgression seems to epitomize and promote the forces of racial disruption; the general cultural disturbance, the real scandal brought about by her act, was that the divinely sanctioned racial hierarchy was undermined. The idea of a god-given nature and destiny had the corollary that nothing so essentially predetermined

could or should ever change. Daphne's act of touching India enables the colonised to transgress his limits by entering into an alliance with a woman who belongs legitimately to his master. Daphne's disobedience thus threatens to subvert the norms of her society by undermining the notion of the metaphysical fixity of races. But the terms of her 'disobedience' and subversion are dictated by the narrative determinism of Scott's text which does not allow Daphne's story to have a fairy-tale ending. A gang of peasants who are in Mayapore for the rioting and looting triggered by the arrest of Congress party members chance upon Daphne and Hari in the act of love in the pavilion of an abandoned Indian-style house known as the Bibighar. With the taboo of racial segregation momentarily broken, the peasants repeat what they have just seen, while Hari is forced to watch. The two images of sexual intercourse follow in quick succession: one of love and the other of violence and racial contempt. Scott's narrative seems to suggest that the racial contempt exhibited in Daphne's rape is a logical consequence of her inter-racial love, thus almost holding Daphne responsible for her fate. As she unwittingly blurs the distinction that the imperial ideology deems imperative to keep distinct, she commits a deep violation of the principle of fixed racial division on which colonialism rests, generating in the minds of the native hooligans an interrogation of both the

racial metaphysics and the oppressive imperial system that has set this divine principle into motion, and shifting racial identity and racial difference irretrievably from the domain of metaphysics into the arena of custom, of the social, of that which can be contested. It is this questioning and this shifting that give the Indian peasants the heart to turn the racial metaphysics inside out through a brutal display of their contempt for the imperial set-up which manifests itself in a brutal gang-rape. Though Scott treats the love of Hari and Daphne with sympathy and tenderness, allowing each of them their individuality, the sympathetic handling of their love is undermined as it gives way to an unsympathetic treatment of their respective fates. In the final analysis, *The Jewel in the Crown* turns out to be not a story of inter-racial love, but a tragic account of the sinister consequences of such a love; it is not the tale of Daphne and Hari, but the bleak saga of the ravishment of English womanhood at the hands of the natives.

The narration of the two sexual intercourses that follow one another in quick succession also serves a twin ideological purpose. With a single stroke of the pen, it enables Scott to depict the colonised as a group of vandals who need to be civilized and the white woman as a lustful being whose sexual excesses need to be harnessed, thus reinforcing the white patriarchal order. Daphne's ravishment

at the hands of the native hooligans conforms to an imperial ideology that interprets the colonial encounter as a maniacal battle between civilisation and barbarism and reduces the colonised to his pathological lust for a white woman. According to Ania Loomba, the myth of the black rapist"... perpetuates black animalism while obliterating female agency, and thus simultaneously 'erases' the two most problematic areas for patriarchal racism -- the humanity of the alien race and the active sexuality of women".<sup>10</sup> But Daphne's climactic act of insubordination -- her inter-racial conjugation with Hari -- problematises the issue even further as it cannot be contained within the 'myth of the black rapist'. Hari is not a rapist and Daphne is not an unwilling victim of his sexual assault. The female agency in this case therefore is not annihilated, as Daphne remains an active participant in the act. Their (Daphne-Hari) union serves to highlight the active sexuality of the white woman whose desire for a dark-skinned lover, though forbidden, is always imminent.

The white patriarchal order exercises its control over the English woman through the ideology of domesticity which is contingent upon the invisibility of the subjugated race and the innate repulsion for everything native. "British women in the colonised subcontinent", writes Sara Suleri, "were required to remain on the peripheries of colonisation,

collecting from that vantage point peripheral images of people and places...They could sketch landscapes and capture physiognomy as long as they remained immune to the sociological conclusions of their own data, entering the political domain in order to aestheticize rather than to analyse".<sup>11</sup> Such a colonial immunity was arduous to sustain in the politically charged climate of India in 1942 -- the year that witnessed the popular upsurge of Gandhi's Quit India Movement. It was in this year that Daphne drifted from her domestic confines to the central stage of Anglo-India. Daphne confesses to herself that as a consequence of her meeting with Hari her world-view had expanded. At a literal level, this confession implies that her acquaintance with Hari "opens up areas of the city of Mayapore with which few other members of the white community are familiar."<sup>12</sup> Her visits to the Tirupati temple, Sister Ludmila's sanctuary, Hari's aunt's house in Chillianwallah and Bibighar serve as a prelude to the climactic final act of her disobedience. In other words, her sexual transgression is mapped out in terms of her movement away from the symbol of privacy--the Anglo-Indian home.

Daphne's confession however is coded with much wider ideological and political significance as it also entails a realisation that she has been transformed from a passive repository of cultural purity into an active agent, who not

only walks across to "the other side of the line", but also instead of merely recording in journals and letters the different aspects of colonial life, passes scathing pronouncements on accepted British attitudes:

Perhaps at one time there was a moral as well as a physical force at work. But the moral thing had gone sour. Has gone sour. Our faces reflect the sourness. The women look worse than the men because consciousness of physical superiority is unnatural to us. A white man in India can feel physically superior without unsexing himself. But what happens to a woman if she tells herself that ninety nine per cent of the men she sees are not men at all, but creatures of an inferior species whose colour is their main distinguishing mark?

(*JC*, p. 512)

Daphne's self-analysis has led her to the realization that the memsahibs have virtually unsexed the subcontinent. Such a self-realisation signals her precarious entry into the forbidden political domain of race relations. From her uneasiness about the racial prejudices of her own people to her association with a darkskinned man, Daphne moves forward in a relationship that gives Hari back his identity. When she first meets him, Hari is "a totally assimilated Indian, Macaulay's 'black Englishman', who has suffered the intense trauma of finding himself invisible to the English. Once he is thrust back by fortune, penniless, into the alleys of Mayapore".<sup>13</sup> But a white woman's love for him remakes him as a man who casts 'a shadow' upon the stage of Anglo-India. By

treating the natives as concrete individuals, by seeing them rather than seeing through them, she attempts to assert her own identity. She visualises herself set in diametrical opposition to the world around her, but Scott takes meticulous care to demonstrate that she has unwittingly and unconsciously internalised the racial prejudices of the very imperial structures she attempts to transcend -- "I knew what was best for both of us, because the colour of my skin automatically put me on the side of those who never told a lie" (JC, p.542). She sides with the 'natives' in the trials that follow her rape not out of loyalty or a sense of love and compassion for them, but because she is afraid of implicating Hari in the crime. Her description of her assailants -- "hooligans from some village" (JC, p.528), "peasant dress, dirty and smelly" (JC, p.538) "men of that kind, labourers, hooligans, stinking to high heaven" (JC, p.535) and "smelly peasants" (JC, p.545) -- are in keeping with the imperial ideology which constructs the natives as an uncivilised race. The moral imperative of imperialism -- to bring the colonised into civil society meant that the native had to be projected as being savage before he could be civilised. When Daphne describes her Indian assailants as lacking civilised human values, she is implicitly subscribing to the same ideology. Split thus, between the desire of transcending the racial hierarchy and a deepseated

internalisation of the very structure she seeks to subvert, Daphne remains embedded in what she opposes. Isn't she then paradoxically reproducing the very laws that marginalised and oppressed her? In this sense, Stephen Greenblatt's perceptive remark on Marlowe's heroes is also applicable to Daphne:

...they simply reverse the paradigms and embrace what the society brands as evil. In so doing they imagine themselves set in diametrical opposition to their society where in fact they have unwittingly accepted its crucial structural elements.<sup>14</sup>

Daphne's incipient rebellion, however, plays a revealing role in so much as it focuses attention on the inherent contingency and potential contradictions within the structure of power. But as such contradictions may contribute to the disintegration of the existing order of the society, the imperial ideology working within and through the text quickly smoothens them out. By making Daphne die early, Scott not only restores order in the colonial set-up but also dispenses with the character whose sole narrative function was to highlight the catastrophic consequences of female disobedience. Furthermore, she is reinstated into the colonial order as a "victim" who needs to be protected from the uncontrolled sexuality of the colonised race. The idea of "an innocent white girl savaged and outraged by black barbarians", (*JC*, p.195) becomes a ruse for policing Indian nationalists. The image of the



desecration of English womanhood outlives the story of Daphne's life as Scott weaves around her mutilated body a discourse of rape, race and gender that strengthens rather than questions the white patriarchal institution.

Bibighar, the arena Daphne enters with the desire of transcending the racial hierarchy, is a place fraught with 'unexpected' and 'mysterious' dangers which cannot be imagined even in the wildest of nightmares. She enters Bibighar with a semblance of her English identity but she leaves it scarred with the marks of the natives 'ingratitude' as a result of which she loses control over her own body. This is why she is unable to plead for the legitimacy of her association with Hari and is silenced forever. After entering "the place of the black" (JC, p.178), Daphne is forced to shrink back from it as a consequence of the unfortunate occurrences that befell her against the background of the haunted ruins, never to visit it again. Bibighar continues to be the place where "the Europeans seldom went, except to look and sneer and be reminded of that other Bibighar in Cawnpore", (JC, p.172) and now it also reminded them of Daphne. Daphne's rebellion is thus not allowed to attain an autonomous status, that is, the world she enters through the desire to transgress is not revealed to be a plausible alternative to the society she desires to subvert. Scott's narrative does not reject the

imperial institution but it rather negates the alternative -  
- Bibighar, the place where the racial demarcations are fluid. In this sense her rebellion turns out to be not progressive, but retrogressive; not radical, but reactionary.

To cut a long story short, it can be said that Daphne's act of insubordination falls into the category of what Jonathan Dollimore calls "humanist transgression".<sup>15</sup> A "humanist transgression" according to him, is contradistinguished from a 'transgressive reinscription' which seeks to defy the social norms with a view to dislocate the contemporary structures; a "humanist transgression", on the other hand, is "a quest for authenticity" which "suggests that in defying the repressive social order we can discover (and so be true to) our real selves".<sup>16</sup> But Daphne is not able to be 'true' to her real self. *The Jewel in the Crown* thus becomes a clear instance of containment of "humanist transgression", of a sub-culture that has internalised the values and structures of the dominant culture. "In the wake of its failure", Dollimore argues, "we should become deeply sceptical about the very possibility of transgression".<sup>17</sup> In this way, Daphne's blasphemy pays homage to the power it insults by making the reader sceptical of the possibility of disrupting the colonial paradigm.

I would further argue that Daphne is less of a developing consciousness than a series of contradictory positions that women are conventionally supposed to occupy. She is at once a lustful female, a passive victim who needs the protection of her male counterpart and a goddess of inter-racial friendship. Her rebellion is promoted by her sexual desire (it should be noticed that Daphne was not a virgin as she had already entered into loveless acts of copulation on two previous occasions -- see *JC*, p.450), by her craving for a handsome, dark-skinned young man and not by an actual contempt for the racial hierarchy -- "There was an element here of self-satisfaction and special pleading and extra pride in love because of the personal and social barrier I thought my love helped me to surmount" (*JC*, p.526). Her love for Hari is clearly the top priority while her desire to transcend the social hierarchy is merely an accidental offshoot of her love. Daphne, as an agency of action, is thus not guided by the logic of reason and firm ideological convictions, but controlled by the follies of emotional excesses. Her myopic vision becomes symptomatic of her lack of foresight that makes her commit the unforgivable mistake of stepping over the static lines of social segregation, leading to the disaster of the Bibighar gardens. Her nightmarish encounter with the Indian peasants annihilates the female agency in her, pushing her to the

silent space of passive victimage. She is a victim at two levels. At the first level, she silently endures the humiliations arising out of her rape for the sake of the man she loves, but she is able to save neither Hari nor herself. Hari is sent to prison on the charge of disrupting social order while Daphne meekly submits and responds to the call of death. The firm determination that she displays in giving birth to her child despite unrelenting social pressures, raises her to the pedestal of a goddess. "When she dies in giving birth to Parvati", writes Sujit Bose, "she attains the stature of a heroine of Anglo-Indian friendship, a martyr for looking beyond race and colour".<sup>18</sup> On another level, she is a victim (as discussed earlier) who needs to be protected from the savage instincts of an uncivilised culture.

Thus, in Scott's portrayal of Daphne, there are mainly two contrasted female stereotypes, one 'predatory', 'dominating', usually 'lustful', 'destructive' and 'voluble', and the other 'saintly', 'submissive', 'faithful', 'forgiving' and 'silent'. Oscillating between the role of an agent and that of a victim, and fractured between the desire of self-assertion and a surrender to the pre-assigned gender role of self-denial, Daphne becomes a schizophrenic consciousness who speaks with equal conviction from incompatible subject positions -- that of a lustful

female and that of a goddess and a victim. Moreover, such a discontinuity of being can be interpreted as an inconsistency which is seen as characteristically feminine. The schizophrenic nature of Daphne's consciousness is suggested by her very name -- Daphne Manners. Daphne in Greek mythology is a nymph who ran away from Apollo and as punishment for her act of insubordination was subsequently transformed into a laurel<sup>19</sup>, while Manners connotes adherence to the norms and propriety of culture. "Picture her then Daphne Manners" (JC, p.117).

The discourse of race and gender in the colonial context is also intricately linked with that of class, problematising the question of the white woman's role in fostering and threatening racial relations even further. Though Daphne hails from the ranks of the aristocracy, she loses both her parents at an early age, leaving her without a 'proper home'. The home and the family play an invaluable part in perpetuating the moral and cultural values of a particular class and race. Deprived thus, by fate, of the nurturing influence of a 'proper home' and of her parents, Daphne's education in the virtues and norms of her society remains incomplete. As a 'lady' is a lady both by 'birth' and 'education', the 'destructive female' (Daphne) is marginalised from the very society she hails from and she is symbolically made to inhabit a no-man's land. Lady

Chatterji, her host at McGregor house, is literally neither Indian nor English. Her birth prevents her from enjoying an English identity while her education disassociates her from her own race (this also holds true for Hari Kumar, the man with whom Daphne falls in love). The depiction of the 'disobedient' white woman as an orphan living in the McGregor house has significant overtones, for it locates the natural origin of a social disruption in those who do not legitimately occupy a place in the traditional social order. Certainly, in the interest of the ideological economy of Scott's narrative, it is imperative that the threatening and destructive aspects of female 'insubordination' should be located in and contained through the punishment of a scapegoat figure who has vacated her legitimate place in the social and racial hierarchy.

In sharp contrast to Scott's modern nymph whom Apollo chased, stands Sarah Layton whose first name literally means "princess"<sup>20</sup> -- the female custodian of the virtues and proprieties of a culture. "You did not look", Susan tells her sister "and never looked like someone people could rub out" (*The Day*, p.410). Even Scott cannot rub her out as she remains central to, rather than marginalised by the imperial ideology, operating within and through his narrative. Sarah's story is one of liberation from the smug and blind traditions of her family and the racial intolerance of her

class. But unlike Daphne, she has a strong sense of belonging, a deep sense of inherited identity from both sides of her family -- the Laytons and the Muirs. In other words, Sarah occupies a legitimate place in the social order. She does not stray from her assigned place in the colonial hierarchy and performs the role entrusted to her to perfection. In this sense she is the obverse of Daphne and therefore I could argue that Sarah does not take off, as David Rubin suggests, from where Daphne left.<sup>21</sup>

Scott ~~seems~~ to construct Sarah's identity through the negation of her double -- Daphne Manners. Though both of them have a number of superficial similarities, the ideological construction of their consciousness is different. While Sarah succumbs to social pressure, Daphne believes in defying the norms of society. Sarah's initial resistance to Mildred's proposal of getting rid of her fetus gives way, and she undergoes the abortion so that her mother can continue to keep up appearances and retain her social superiority.

This incident is in direct contrast to Daphne's insistence on giving birth to her half-Indian, half-English child despite all social pressures and oppositions. The distinction between Sarah and Daphne is therefore of one between self-denial and self-assertion. Sarah encourages her younger sister Susan to get married, though she herself is

still unmarried, not because she is resisting an impending disintegration of her being that marriage might bring about, but because the absence of her father, Col. Layton, who is a war prisoner in Germany, requires that she should remain a tower of strength for her family. The mobility she acquires by stepping out of her domestic confines and entering the masculine domain of professional expertise, does not contain within itself the seeds of female insubordination, because a certain freedom of movement for women is legitimately sanctioned by the patriarchy during times of war. "The great war", writes Sandra Gilbert, "at least temporarily dispossessed male citizens of the patriarchal primacy that has always been their birthright, while granting women access to... the professions that they had never before possessed."<sup>22</sup> Sarah's liberation is thus structured less as a woman's progress towards the goal of total female emancipation than as a story of self-effacement for the sake of the greater demands of family and society. The domestic virtue of self-renunciation exhibited by Sarah signals a clear break from the position Daphne occupies.

In fact, Sarah and Daphne stand at two poles in relation to the colonial structures of power. This polarity finds its most apt expression in the man-child opposition which Scott invokes to illustrate the fundamental difference between the two characters. While Sarah is repeatedly



described as 'a man', Daphne is time and again referred to as 'a child'. By endowing Sarah with the attributes of manliness, Scott divests her of the vulnerability generally associated with the 'fair sex', while he makes Daphne's position even more precarious and fragile by linking her to the insecurity of childhood. In the same stroke, Sarah is positioned at the centre of the imperial structures of power -- as man is inevitably placed closer to the heart of civilisation than both a woman and a child -- while Daphne is marginalised. A child is not considered an integral part of civilisation as s/he is yet to undergo the process of proper socialisation. The child inhabits the realm of nature, a realm that lies beyond the socially defined space of culture. In this way, Miss Layton becomes a model female member of her community, a touchstone against which the actions and conduct of the other English women are measured. Daphne, on the other hand is constructed as 'the outsider' who threatens to disrupt and throw the entire colonial order into a state of crisis.

Though Sarah, like Daphne, is extremely sensitive to the racial prejudices that plague her society, her criticism of the imperial structure is done from within the culture, as she does not put forward a plausible alternative to the existing order. Daphne, on the other hand, questions the very validity of the structure. Sarah remains strictly

within the parameters laid down by the colonial institution as she is unable to pass the 'ultimate test of colour bar'. According to Patrick Swinden, "the ultimate test of colour bar was the willingness or otherwise of men and women, particularly women, to transgress it in the cultivation of sexual relationships."<sup>23</sup> Sarah's attraction for Ahmed fails to flower into the intimacy of a consciously shared relationship as she is neurotically aware of the existence of 'the line', the line she dare not cross. The fantasy that Merrick had on first seeing Sarah -- "I think there was a sort of fantasy in my mind of Hari and Daphne being about to come together again" (*The Day*, p.253) -- turns out to be a possibility that is raised in the realm of fantasy and erased in the world of reality as Sarah is able to subject her unwarranted passion (her love for Ahmed) to the wholesome discipline expected of an ideal English woman dwelling in the colonial territory. She is able to come out of the intense trauma associated with the dissolution of the British Empire without being scarred, thanks to the exceptional control over her emotions. Her reward for the admirable restraint she displays is a desirable marriage with Guy Perron, a man of her own race and class -- though the reader is made to wait till Scott's next novel *Staying on* (1975) to be informed about the fairy tale ending of the story of Sarah Layton, a story which could be most aptly

captioned as 'virtue rewarded'. Scott deliberately contrives the death of Daphne in the very first volume so that a model English woman can take the position of the 'disobedient female' at the centre and control the narrative of *The Quartet*.

## II

See that heathen mother stand  
Where the sacred current flows  
With her own maternal hands,  
Mid the waves her babe she throws.  
Send, oh send, the Bible there,  
Let its precept reach the heart,  
She may then her children spare  
Act the tender mother's part.<sup>24</sup>

-- *American Missionaries and Hinduism*, 1967

In *A Passage to India*, Forster introduces us to two missionaries - both men - "old Mr. Graysford and young Mr. Sorley" - who are earnest but entirely peripheral figures in Chandrapore's white society. This portrayal suggests that the missionaries were not a part of the colonial structure of power. Nevertheless, the Christian mission was clearly implicated in the imperial ideology that established the Indians as desperately in need of a civilising influence.

The missionaries were not only the helpmates of the imperialists, but were themselves cultural imperialists who re-enacted the drama of the coloniser and the colonised in the 'dark areas' that lay beyond the socially defined space in Anglo-India, under the pretext of philanthropy. The Christian faith and the Christian habits and attitudes, actually the English habits and attitudes, could never be firmly established in the subcontinent unless the children, the women and the lower classes of the Indian society were brought under the Gospel. It was the duty of the missionary, particularly of the woman missionary<sup>25</sup>, to act as the missing link between the white and the black races and to extend the civilizing influence to what Geraldine Forbes calls 'the Pure Heathen'.<sup>26</sup> Edwina Crane and Barbara Batchelor, the missionary women in Scott's *Quartet*, play their respective roles in converting an entire nation to the western system of values by imparting to the colonised an education entirely based on English ways of life. Hence, whatever sympathy they may have evinced towards the native was deeply rooted in the belief of the moral and the racial superiority of the white as civilisers -- "the native town had frightened her with its narrow dirty streets, its disgusting poverty, its raucous dissonant music, its verminous dogs, its starving, mutilated beggars, its fat white sacred Brahmin bulls and its ragged population of men

and women..." (JC, p.19). Mrs. Crane was a wielder of power who, like the paternalism of the Raj, aimed at results -- the emancipation of the "Pure Heathen".

The position of the missionary woman in India was quite different from that of the other women of her race who were supposed to confine their existence to the domestic sphere of the Anglo-Indian household. Placed on the periphery of "the charmed circle of the privileged" (JC, p.17), she did not adhere to the strict racial demarcation, as the carrying out of her duty meant that she "would be with blacks and half-castes, cut off from your (her) own kind" (JC, p.24). The missionary woman walked out of the domestic enclosure into the 'uncivilised' domain of the native, extending her circle of influence beyond the empty world of dinner parties and morning calls. This movement away from the socially defined territory of Anglo-India did not disrupt either the gender or the social hierarchy, as her missionary work was looked upon as the natural extension of the domestic virtue of self-denial into the public arena. She was required to efface her sexuality and renounce the joys of having a home of her own in response to the call of the Gospel. In other words, imperialism grants a freedom of movement to the white woman by reworking a colonial space as it reinvents the domestic labour in terms of the civilizing enterprise of the Christian mission.

To Mr. Cleghorn the 'semi-historical', 'semi-allegorical' (JC, p.30) picture entitled 'The Jewel in Her Crown' stands for the abstract ideals of the civilising enterprise --justice, benevolence and good intentions (JC, p.31) -- while Edwina Crane sees in the figure of the queen sitting under the canopy throne, an embodiment of the feminine virtues of self-denial, devotion and moral duty -- virtues that the Christian mission demanded of her . A self-made woman, Miss Crane, the superintendent of the Christian mission school in Mayapore, has moulded for herself the persona of a capable woman entrusted with the divine duty of teaching the local people the English language and at the same time love of the English (JC, p.31) and also protecting them from the attacks of the rioting mob. This persona which is firmly grounded in the imperial role of the English as the civiliser and protector of the simultaneously barbarous and weak race dwelling in the darkness of the primitive age and unable to protect itself, has always been to Miss Crane a shield against the hostile immensity of India, the 'otherness' of both the people and the culture of the subcontinent, and the wounding condescension of the 'Pukka' Anglo-Indian. Even in her time of crisis, it was her firm belief in the moral and racial superiority of the white that came to her rescue. Confronted with a mob of hooligans bent upon setting the building of the school on fire, she

found herself in an awkward plight as she occupied a subordinate gender position in relation to the rampant rioters. But by drawing strength from her superior racial position, she is able to defuse the crisis and drive the rioting mob away and thus protect the building of the school and save the lives of her Indian students.

However, twenty-eight years later when faced with a similar awkward situation but in a much more politically charged atmosphere, she makes the grievous mistake of going over the hump of traditional race demarcation as a result of which chaos strikes. On her way back from Dibrapur with her Indian subordinate Mr Chaudhuri, her car is ambushed by an angry mob that threaten to burn it down. When Mr. Chaudhuri attempts to save her, Edwina Crane's initial reaction, born out of an instinctive racial arrogance, is to resist his help. Finally, when she submits herself to the protection of her Indian subordinate, her self-constructed persona and her belief in the superiority of her race crumbles. Mr Chaudhuri is able to save her life, but only at the cost of his own. As the racial hierarchy is disturbed, tragedy sets in as Miss Crane is forced into a complete withdrawal from the life around her, culminating in her suicide. She immolates herself in a manner reminiscent of the Hindu tradition of 'Sati'.

The story goes that for this act of becoming suttee... she dressed for the first time in her life in a white saree, the saree for her adopted country, the whiteness for widowhood and mourning.

(*JC*, p.145)

The image of the sacrificial fire that consumes Miss Crane, dissolving and disintegrating her being, is again invoked fourteen hundred pages later to describe the final moments of Barbara Batchelor.

They found her thus eternally alert in sudden sunshine, her shadow burnt into the wall behind her as if by some distant but terrible fire.

(*TS*, p.464)

The fire here is not merely the reflected memory of Edwina Crane, nor is its significance confined to the sacrificial act of self-immolation performed by a true Hindu widow as Sati becomes a trope for the domestic subjugation of the English woman in the colonial context.

Jenny Sharpe in her perceptive study of *Jane Eyre's* self-renunciation for the maintenance of the moral order of the English society, views the Hindu custom of Sati as an "icon" for the domestic subjugation of woman to the patriarchal structures of England.<sup>27</sup> 'Hindu widow sacrifice' she argues, "refers to the self-sacrifice that the doctrine of woman's mission requires of English women. As a proper name for woman's submissiveness, meekness, and devotion to



her husband, sati located female passivity in Hindu woman".<sup>28</sup> The colonial enterprise, like the patriarchy operating in the English society, venerates English womanhood as an institution, to the extent of devaluing the lives of individual women. As wives, the white women in India were expected to stifle their identity in the suffocating enclosure of the Anglo-Indian home so that the racial purity and moral superiority of the ruling race could be maintained. As missionaries they are expected to efface their sexuality and renounce the joys of a worldly existence for the greater cause of the civilising enterprise of imperialism. Such an enterprise does not allow the assertion of one's individuality or viewing the process of colonisation with a critical eye. But both Edwina Crane and Barbara Batchelor make the unforgivable mistake of trying to discover their 'real selves' and in the process cast an introspective eye upon their mission in India. "We are", says Barbara Batchelor, "only visitors. That has been our mistake. That is why God has not followed us here" (*TS*, p.451). Such a self-reflection diminishes the moral superiority with which the coloniser legitimises his presence in the subcontinent as it shatters the image of imperial India as one family bound together by the filial loyalty of *Maibap* (you are my father and mother). If in Forster, the liberals stand up one by one only to sit down

again as the Turttons remain smugly in command, in Scott, the liberals stand up one by one not to sit down again but to be punished by fate -- a fate contrived by the narrative determinism of Scott's text. Edwina Crane, by submitting herself to the protection of her Indian subordinate, breaks the law of binarism that exists between the 'coloniser' and the 'colonised'. By doing so she invites the unwarranted verbal attack that mocks Mr. Chaudhuri and insults her in a single stroke: "no self-respecting Indian male would side with a dried-up virgin memsahib who needed to feel the strength of a man inside" (JC, p.78). Edwina's only crime was that she traced the root cause of all the trouble to "the little matter of the colour of the skin which gets in the way of our seeing through each other's feelings and seeing into each other's hearts" (JC, p.85). It is a crime that enables the loyal Indians who are depicted standing passively in their assigned places in the racial hierarchy in the picture "*The Jewel in Her Crown*", to free themselves from the jaded frame of the portrait to become the rioting Indians who crowd the road from Dibrapore to Mayapore.

The missionary woman in this novel came to her end in India because she was liberal in her views; the circumstances of the subcontinent tested the strength of her liberal philosophy and it could not take the strain. The eventual failure to construct a bridge between the two races

shocks Edwina into her despairing withdrawal and stuns Miss Batchelor into a maddening silence. All that is necessary to make life livable for Barbie -- friends, security, help, reputation and even intellect -- is taken from her while the world around her is transformed into a nightmare -- Mable being prepared for autopsy and the joyless acts of sexual frivolity committed by Mildred. The moral seems to be that those who do not occupy their legitimate place in society are doomed to a dark future. The utter failure of the missionary women's (Edwina's and Barbara's) attempt to foster a loving relationship between the two races is deliberately subverted by the narrative of Scott's text, almost to suggest that the time for the Fieldingesque synthesis of East and West is 'not here, not now'.

### III

Now-a-days there is a commonly held belief that most of the Raj's fault arose from the attitudes of its women. Certainly no one was more adept at making an Indian feel like something crawling from under a stone than Memsahib...<sup>29</sup>

-- 'The Raj', 1969

Commenting upon Paul Scott's portrayal of English women in the *Raj Quartet*, Max Beloff observes: "The stereotype of the memsahib has now been destroyed once and for all, one would hope. For the portraits that he draws of British women in India -- whether missionaries or as simply occupied with the trivialities of cantonment or hill station

society -- are all individually etched. They respond to India in different ways; with devotion, affection, indifference, or even hatred, but it is an individual, not a collective response".<sup>30</sup> Scott's English women are indeed 'individually etched' but in no way is the stereotype of the 'memsahib' destroyed as it finds a new lease of life in Mildred Layton, who is what M.M. Kaye calls a 'snobbish suburban bitch',<sup>31</sup> and behind her there is a host of similar white women who spend most of their time playing a game of bridge that, instead of bridging the gulf of class and race, widens them. But such frivolous and snobbish women were the victims of a system not of their own making.

I would not go to the extent of arguing that the stereotype of the 'memsahib' is simply a false representation of real women. It is rather the effect of the circumscribed and uprooted lives that the English women in India led. In a polemic essay on the plight of the English women in India, J.E.Dawson demonstrates that the stereotypical memsahib is the product of the social restrictions placed on a colonial wife.<sup>32</sup> She paints a sorry picture of a lonely and bored housewife confined to the domestic sphere with nothing to occupy her mind. She is not permitted to indulge in philanthropic work, nor is she allowed to learn an Indian language because of the necessity of sheltering her from the contaminating influences of an

uncivilised culture.<sup>33</sup> The complete absence of social duties, Dawson concludes, other than hosting dinner parties and preparing for balls, forced these women into a superficial life style centered on fashion, flirtation and frivolities.<sup>34</sup>

Although best known through Forster's merciless caricature in *A Passage to India*, the memsahib is a notorious female figure who comes into her own in this age of Raj revivalism in the person of Mildred Layton, the small-minded social snob who tyrannically rules over her household and refuses to associate with Indians, only to be used by Scott as a scapegoat for the demise of the Empire. It is Mildred who commits the sacrilege of converting Mabel's rose garden, the natural symbol of love and innocence, into a tennis court, the social battleground of a perpetual contest for power. Scott however does not paint Mildred as a dark figure devoid of all virtues. "Her air of detachment," Perron says of Mildred, "the economy of movement, expression, the hard outer-casing of the memsahib -- so often tiresome in other members of that monstrous regiment -- were in her peculiar graces" (*DS*, p.331). As a true memsahib, Mildred Layton was always ready to shoulder the paternalist role of an absent husband. While Colonel Layton is away in prison in Germany, she stands in for him and consoles the wives and families of those Indian soldiers

either killed or taken prisoners in the North African campaign. By highlighting this side of Mildred's character, Scott is not attempting a neutral assessment of the memsahib, as Antony Copley seems to suggest<sup>35</sup>, rather he is saving the character of Mildred from degenerating into a cardboard figure, a mere caricature like Forster's Mrs. Turton and Mrs. Calendar.

"We do not wish to advocate an unholy haughtiness", Flora Annie Steel wrote in her best selling guide for Anglo-Indian housewives, "but Indian households can no more be governed peacefully, without dignity and prestige, than an Indian empire." <sup>36</sup> Mildred Layton appears to be a typical memsahib strictly educated on the lines of Steel's manual. She rises to the challenge of maintaining the dignity of the ruling race by asserting her class and racial superiority even though to do so were now to act out a charade; a charade in which her younger daughter Susan play the role of a hollow, self-centered white woman, who dwelling in her domestic confines, is not at all bothered by the morals of the Raj. As her existence is confined to the suffocating atmosphere of her Anglo-Indian home, Susan is a helpless victim who is unable to bear the stress of the demands that the colonial enterprise makes upon a white woman. She is a powerless woman, a 'drawing any one can rub off' (*The Day*, p.410). But Mildred Layton is elevated to an icon of power

whose persecution of Barbie is as merciless as Merrick's flogging of Hari. By making a place for herself in Rose Cottage, Barbie is attempting to attain an upward social mobility not acceptable to Mildred. But Mildred's real crime is not her class snobbery nor is it her entrance into a joyless extra-marital relationship with Kevin Coley. She suffers what can be best described as a post-natal depression. "It does not seem to me", says Barbie, "to matter very much whether she appears half-dressed in front of Kevin Coley. But I think it matters to God and to the world that she rode with him to the valley and offered matriarchal advice to women older and as wise or wiser than she" (TS, p.287).

The English woman's moral agency, rather than her moral values, serves as the sign of civilisation and progress. In other words, what matters is how the English woman projects herself in the eyes of the natives and not her conduct within the private sphere of her home. Mildred's extra-marital relationship with a 'subaltern', while her husband is away, could not have affected the destiny of the empire, but by going out together with him into the colonised space, Mildred reduces her role as a moral agency of civilisation to a hollow sham.

While Mildred is busy keeping up appearances for the sake of the English in India, Mable is disillusioned by the

very foundation of imperialism. "The god has left the temple. What one was left with were the rites which had once propitiated, once been obligatory, but were now meaningless, because the god was no longer there to receive them." (TS, p.306). Mabel was looked upon as the representative of the golden age, a symbol of distinction among the English women of Pankot. Distinguished she was, but not in the sense Mildred was, for she had dissociated herself from the Anglo-Indian community after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. Instead of contributing to the Dyer fund, she sent money for the innocent victims of the massacre. Dyer's gruesome exercise of naked power made Mabel reconsider her loyalties and she was forced to withdraw from the active world of Ranpur into the artificial surroundings of the hill station of Pankot. In her withdrawal she voices a protest against the imperial regime but this protest is of no avail. As she has no issues, her rebellion represents a kind of sterility. Lady Manners, on the other hand, does not withdraw from Anglo-India, rather she tries to unravel the mystery of the Bibighar. The unwelcome revelation of Merrick's treatment of Hari causes her regret, for what she hears from the cross-examination of Hari Kumar seems to contradict the very ideological formulations of her generation. She is unable to live with the burden of such a knowledge. In other words, her inquisitive nature and her movement away from the



innocent domestic confines of her home to the forbidden political domain of race relations make a mess of her life. The example of Lady Manners who vacates her legitimate position in Anglo-India to get involved in its politics, and Mabel Layton who rejects the role assigned to an English woman in the subcontinent only to become deaf and withdraw into a maddening silence, may on the surface appear to be Scott's endorsement of the liberal standpoint, but the narrative of Scott's text does not allow either of the two women to find happiness and self-fulfilment in what they represent. Mabel continues to live in the illusion of her 'rose garden' till she is deprived of her senses and ultimately succumbs to death, while Lady Manners is perpetually disturbed by what she learns.

Thus, in one way or the other, the 'memsahibs' of the *Quartet* are trapped in an artificial world. Whether they are performing or rejecting the roles assigned to the English women in India. They all seem to be out of touch with time as if their lives were "preserved by some sort of perpetual Edwardian sunlight that got trapped between the Indian ocean and the Arabian sea round about the turn of the century."  
(*The Day*, p.509)

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25. Geraldine Forbes in her article, 'In search of the "Pure Heathen" Missionary Woman in 19th century India', *op. cit.*, demonstrates that it was only the women missionaries who could enter the Janana, an area into which the white men's entry was not permissible and therefore the Indian women could only be brought into the spheres of colonial influence with the help of white women. Until and unless the Indian women were emancipated and brought into the ways of the civilised world the civilising mission couldn't have been said to have succeeded in its objectives. Therefore the role played by the missionary women was particularly significant.
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## CHAPTER IV

### THE HOMO-EROTIC ENCOUNTER AND THE SOCIAL OUTSIDER

Can't the fool see that nobody of the class he aspires to belong to has ever cared a damn about the empire and that all that God-the-father-God-the-raj was a lot of insular middle-and lower-class shit.<sup>1</sup>

-- *A Division of the Spoils*, 1975

"The 'Colonising Power'", writes Gayatri Spivak, "is far from monolithic...its class composition and social positionality are necessarily heterogenous."<sup>2</sup> The whole of the British domestic scene with its own inherent class frictions and enmities was transported into the Indian subcontinent, problematising the unnatural relation between the races even further.<sup>3</sup> At home in England, the lower middle class was bitter, loathing his social superiors but accepting their right to rule. In India, however, these inhibitions evaporated under the heat of the colonial sun as he was confronted with a group of individuals in relation to whom he stood in a position of racial superiority.<sup>4</sup> The imperial enterprise provided him with an outlet for releasing his burning sense of humiliation arising out of an almost neurotic awareness of his inferior social status; his bitterness manifested itself in the colonial territory in a sadistic delight in the misuse of his privileged position,

emanating from a grinding belief in his racial superiority and leading to countless acts of wanton brutality.<sup>5</sup> The imperial abuse of power is typified in the latent homosexuality of the bottom-flogging English Superintendent of Police of Scott's *The Raj Quartet*. In fact, Scott's portrayal of Ronald Merrick brings out all the inherent contradictions and dilemmas faced by a white man of humble origin, transplanted into the unfamiliarity of the colonial setting with such artistic brilliance that the perceptive critic Gita Mehta is compelled to remark that in Scott's revision of the Raj, "The issue is not imperialism versus nationalism but class."<sup>6</sup> The real question, which this chapter seeks to explore, is to what extent and to what effect is the ideology of class implicated in the structures of colonialism?

"Attitudes to race and class", Kenneth Ballhatchet poignantly observes, "have the function of supporting vested interests and the structures of authority, and I think this is... explicitly stated by Ronald Merrick himself."<sup>7</sup> In his unsparing critique of the working of the imperial institutions, Scott seeks to locate in the lower middle class the ultimately destructive psychological satisfaction of having power over a subjugated culture. He seems to suggest that an innocent brown skinned man falsely accused of raping a white woman is himself metaphorically raped by a

racist government. Hari, the public school educated Indian is stripped naked, tied to a trestle and mercilessly beaten with a cane on his bare buttocks by the grammar school educated English Superintendent of Police who is gifted with a mechanically perfect logic of racial hatred. Instances of Merrick's abuse of power multiply as the narrative of the *Quartet* unfolds. The reader is made aware of his (Merrick's) almost maniacal persecution of Havildar Karim Muzaffar Khan (a deserter from the Army) and his homosexual inclinations for a native household servant. In other words, Scott turns Merrick into a repository of racism and corruption with which many Englishmen serving in the colonial enterprise were infected; an attitude and practice that shattered the myth of imperial benefaction, widened the gulf between the two races and precipitated the dissolution of the Empire. To Sarah Layton, Merrick represents "our dark side", "the arcane side" (*The Day*, p.476) of the English colonial temperament. "You reveal something that is sad about us", Sarah says, "as if out here we had built a mansion without doors and windows, with no way in and no way out" (*The Day*, p.476).

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I have had twenty five years' experience of this country,... and during those twenty-five years I have never known anything but disaster result when English people and Indian people attempt to be intimate

socially. Intercourse, yes. Courtesy, by all means. Intimacy -- never, never.<sup>8</sup>

-- *A Passage to India*, 1924

Michael Carritt, an ICS officer in colonial India records the spectacle of the Indian landscape in the following words:

Shaped gracefully like a beautiful breast, the snow clad slopes gradually emerged from the night's receding darkness. And the tip of the breast was suffused with a rosy glow from the rising sun.... I must have seen the sunrise on Kanchenjunga at least twenty times... Each new sight of the peak in its rosy flush was a surprise, an exclamation of disbelief followed by a surge of joy.<sup>9</sup>

Carritt's reading of the geography of India undoubtedly falls into the tradition of 'the exotic'; a tradition in which the subcontinent's landscape is invariably feminised and exoticised as it lies in a mysterious passivity at the feet of the colonising sensibility. In this way, the masculine strength of the coloniser is delineated against the curious feminine attraction and meekness of the colonised territory. Such a cultural gendering of races, which the imperial rhetoric repeatedly invokes to perpetuate the power of the subjugating culture over the subjugated one, represents an alterist fallacy as it over-simplifies the unfathomed complexities of the colonial encounter into the static binarisms of monolithic gender categories.

Scott's troubled engagement in the fiction of colonial



self-examination reveals an intuitive understanding of this fallacy and an acute sense of awareness of the dynamics of power inherent in the cultural exchange between the two races, that is, the ghostly mobility with which power is transferred from the subjugating to the subjugated culture in the process of the colonial encounter. In an age of Raj revivalism and revisionism, he (Scott) seeks to dismantle the paradigm of imperial masculinity through a conscious refiguration of colonial sexuality. Rather than the male seeking to possess the feminised territory of the subcontinent, in Scott's *Quartet* (as in Forster's *A Passage to India* before it) it is the white female who attempts to enter the habitat of colonised domesticity -- an attempt that is emblematised in Daphne's visit to the Tirupati temple and her unwarranted entry into the Bibighar gardens. This reversal of gender roles is symptomatic of the precarious nature and the extreme vulnerability of the colonising presence. Scott, however, does not intend to render 'the imperial embrace' in heterosexual terms -- as the coming together of Daphne and Hari. The white woman in the *Quartet* serves as a cipher for a battle between men, as her body is transfigured into a site upon which the rival males, Merrick and Hari, stake their respective claims to superiority. Lily Chatterji at once sizes up Merrick's approach to Daphne as the outsider's hope of absorption into

Anglo-Indian society while to Hari, she (Daphne) is the medium through which he can liberate himself from the subordinate position of his race. But Hari's association with the white woman does not ensure his entry into the society he desperately longs to be a member of; it rather brings him face to face with the sado-masochism and latent homosexuality of the English Superintendent of Police. This confrontation is not merely a confrontation between two individuals, but two nationalities -- the Indian and the English. "He said", Hari reveals to Nigel Rowan, "for the moment we were mere symbols" (*The Day*, p.357). As the narrative of the story unfolds, Daphne's association with her brown-skinned lover and her subsequent rape disappear into the background as Merrick's treatment of Hari firmly establishes itself at the centre stage of Scott's revision of the colonial history of the Indian subcontinent. This cross cultural male bonding which Scott attempts to project as the real trope of the 'imperial embrace', however occurs both within and against the very situation in which heterosexuality is most ardently pursued and it is also the consequence of heterosexual ardour.

I am not suggesting that Scott is a pioneer who invests the 'imperial embrace' with a homo-erotic aura. Such an aura can be traced to the confrontation of the "two strong men" of Kipling's 'Ballad of East and West', to the infantilism

of Kim's love for the Lama<sup>10</sup> and to Forster's *A Passage to India*. Adela Quested foreshadows Daphne in so far as she also serves as a contested body in the dynamics of the cultural exchange between the races<sup>11</sup>:

Miss Quested was only a victim, but young Heaslop was a martyr; he was the recipient of all the evil intended against them by the country they had tried to serve; he was bearing the Sahib's cross.<sup>12</sup>

Forster seems to suggest that the sexual assault of a white woman at the hands of an Indian native is an indirect attack on the white man who bears the cross of the imperial burden.<sup>13</sup> By rendering femininity of the subjugating and subjugated cultures redundant, Forster and Scott give a figurative articulation to the bewildering suspension of power embodied in the hysteria and cultural terror of the home-erotic confrontation of the races implicit in Kipling's 'Ballad of East and West'.

In attempting to establish the lineage of the homo-erotic dynamics of the colonial confrontation, I seek to demonstrate how the inter-racial male bonding becomes more and more complex as we progress from Kipling through Forster to Scott. In *Kim* there is a straight-forward and direct relationship between the young boy and the Lama and it is a relationship in which there exists no role for a female. The same holds true for the "two strong men" who "stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth". In

Forster, this intercultural bonding becomes three dimensional as the white woman enters the iconography of the imperial erotic in the capacity of a contested body which serves as the stage upon which the masculinity of the two cultures enact the drama of their conflicting loyalties and envies.<sup>14</sup> But by the time we reach Scott, this homo-erotic exchange acquires yet another dimension. He spells out in a way Forster could not, that an innocent brown man unjustly punished for the sexual assault of an English woman is himself metaphorically raped by the imperial Government. The sado-masochistic relationship of colonial mastery and native dependence that Merrick forges upon his victim belittles the Indian's racial identity. As Hari is made an object of homosexual desire, he is forced to cross the gender boundary entering the feminised space which bears the inscription of what it means to be 'rapeable'. Even though Scott does not introduce the colonised female into his narrative, his equation of the homo-erotic encounter is far more problematic than Forster's as it contains the additional category of the belittled colonised male -- a category that dismantles the rigidity of the gendering of colonial authority by suggesting that the imperial gaze is not directed to the inscrutability of the 'veiled bride' but to the greater sexual ambivalence of the 'effeminate groom'. "Both the desire and disempowerment (of the coloniser)

within such a formulation", observes Sara Suleri, "underscores the predominantly homo-erotic cast assumed by the narratives of colonialism".<sup>15</sup> Such a configuration also interprets "the gender imbrication implicit in the classification of culture as an anxious provenance partitioned between the weakness and strength of men."<sup>16</sup> In other words, the dynamics of colonial exchange cannot be interpreted in terms of the gendering of culture, as the boundaries of colonial sexuality are essentially and irrevocably muddied; a particular gender cannot be ascribed to a particular culture or race.

In addition to gender and racial hierarchies, the 'imperial embrace' is conditioned and shaped by the structures of class. The colonial history of the subcontinent therefore can be adequately deciphered only by resorting to the three-fold determinants of race, gender and class.<sup>17</sup> The complex interweaving of these three categories has not been properly grasped by Forster as he commits the unforgivable mistake of overlooking the determinant of class altogether. Scott however displays his intuitive understanding of the three-dimensional complexity of the relationship between the subjugating and subjugated cultures by making the grammar school educated Superintendent of Police, who works his way up the colonial ladder to the enviable position of a colonel in the Army, the central

English character of his novel. Since Merrick is deprived of class privileges enjoyed by his fellow imperialists -- White, Perron and Rowan -- he feels threatened by Hari's Englishness and public school education denied to him (Merrick) by the oppressive social structures of English society. The brown-skinned man's perfect upper-class English accent makes the grammar school boy feel vulnerable "for in Merrick's voice there was a different tone, a tone regulated by care and ambition rather than by upbringing" (JC, p.171). The situation is rendered even more precarious from Merrick's point of view by Daphne's preference for Hari over him; a preference that questions both his racial superiority and his masculine honour; it also reinforces his inferior social standing, forcing him to establish a sado-masochistic relationship of master and dependent with the man for whom he nurses bitter social and sexual envy. After supervising an almost maniacal persecution of his victim, it is Merrick himself who bathes Hari's lacerations, offers him water and exacts a statement of gratitude. The physical and psychological torture is designed to make Hari question the upper-class English identity that his Chillingborough education has bestowed upon him, forcing him to recognise his true position as a member of a subordinate race. But Hari is able to retain his identity as he refuses to become Merrick's creature:

The situation only existed on Merrick's terms if we both took part in it. The situation would cease to exist if I detached myself from it.

-- *The Day*, p.363

This assertion of his identity is Hari's way of rejecting the imperial paradigm of native dependence, even as it negates Nigel Rowan's complacent description of his Indian schoolmate as "a man who couldn't have existed without our help and deliberate encouragement." (*DS*, p. 234)

Fuelled by his social and sexual envy, Merrick establishes with Hari a relationship based on contempt, but at an unconscious level, Merrick nurses a desire of emulating Hari's perfect upper-class English accent and his dignified manners. He (Merrick) does not desire the Chillingborough boy but desires to be like him; his is a social desire rather than a purely sexual one. The substitution of the former by the latter, which takes place because of the realisation of the impossibility of emulating the object of envy, is typical of the sexual perversion of the lower middle class as constructed by the colonial ideology. Fractured thus between the superior position of race and the subordinate position of class, Merrick's erotic treatment of the usurping male (Hari) is not the spontaneous eruption of his repressed homosexual inclinations so much as the neurotic manifestation of his subterranean understanding

of the extreme vulnerability of his social status in the colonial setting. The imperial erotic in this case turns out to be the monstrous return of the socially repressed and his deviant sexual behaviour is shown to be profoundly problematic and unstably implicated in the structures of colonialism.

In this dynamics of the homo-erotic, the most significant 'other' is the usurping male, but it is a significance that presupposes and is rehearsed in relation to the contested white female. Daphne is a continuous ghostly presence throughout Merrick's interrogation of Hari. It is necessary to note that in this man-man-woman triangle, the desire that binds the competing men over the contested woman is as erotically invested for the men in relation to each other as for each of them in relation to the woman. As mentioned earlier, Daphne is the actual object of Merrick's desire. His sexual craving for her, unlike his longing for Hari, is a natural one, but it is also prompted by the fact that an association with her would bring about his long cherished assimilation into the upper crust of the Anglo-Indian society. Daphne's preference for her Indian lover over him collapses the object of desire (Daphne) with the object of envy (Hari). The two are unified as she becomes a part of Hari (at least from Merrick's point of view, if not otherwise). Thus through a chain of substitution from the



rival male (the colonised) to the white woman (the social superior), Merrick's treatment of Hari acquires the dimension of a twin assault. It is a direct act of racial violence and at the same time, it is also an indirect attack on the society that has marginalised him; a marginalisation which is suggested in Daphne's rejection of his proposal of marriage.

At another level, by fondling the genitals of his rival in love, Merrick attempts to annihilate Hari's masculine identity, while by using the cane, which is a phallic symbol, upon the bare buttocks of his victim, the closet homosexual is also attempting to reaffirm his masculinity. But the rehabilitation of his masculine identity co-exists with an ironic repudiation of it. The imperial code of honour required that the servants of the Raj should be manly in their conduct.<sup>18</sup> Any kind of perverse sexual behaviour undermined this code of honour. In fact homosexuality, considered an unnatural emotional inclination, hence an inferior form of masculinity, could not be exonerated even by the most convincing pretence of racial superiority<sup>19</sup>; it is a perversion that conjures up the wanton brutality with which the colonial enterprise emasculated the Indian sub-continent. Scott thus identifies the dark side of the cultural exchange of the races with the unmanly behaviour of the lower middle class is and traces the moral decline of

the ideal of imperial benefaction to the corruption of Victorian manliness.<sup>20</sup>

How does Merrick's homo-erotic disappointment affect Scott's reading of the colonial cultural exchange? 'The prince of darkness' (*TS*, p.458) is indeed an undiminishing embarrassment to the English race as his treatment of Kumar transforms his victim's body into a site upon which the exquisite cost of hoping to establish ties of cross-cultural love is determined. Though Merrick's antagonism for Hari is born out of Daphne's love for the handsome Indian youth, the two associations stand at opposite poles of the dynamics of colonial exchange-the first is based upon contempt and envy while the other is constructed upon the twin pillars of admiration and love. What on the surface appear to be contradictory modes of relationship are in reality simply alternative celebrations of Kipling's paradigm-"East is East, West is West and the twain shall never meet." The romantic invitation of inter-racial love engenders the illusion of the coming together of the two races only to create the delusion of accusation underlying which, there lurks an intense sense of racial contempt. Furthermore, Daphne's rape at the hands of native peasants undermines whatever intimacy might have evolved out of her relationship with Kumar.

The complete absence of civil spaces on which the

possibility of inter-racial bonding can be discussed suggests that the fiction of colonial intimacy depends upon the perpetual deferral of Forster's 'not now, not here'. The abortive exchange of cross-cultural love has a significant parallel in the unsuccessful exchange of colonial friendship. Perron's relationship with Hari throws light on yet another facet of inter-racial male bonding. In sharp contrast to Merrick's antagonism for Kumar, Perron exhibits a sense of honourable loyalty for his Indian schoolmate. It is this loyalty that makes him interested in the Bibighar affair and forces him to search for his childhood friend. But the huge lock that hangs on the door of Hari's apartment prevents the English historian from entering the private arena of his Indian friend and in the process reveals, in a manner reminiscent of Aziz and Fielding's abortive exchange of cross-cultural loyalty, the profound fragility of colonial intimacy.<sup>21</sup> In fact, the closing lines of *A Passage to India*, though not written by Scott, beautifully sum up his scepticism towards the possibility of the coming together of the two races: .lm5

"Why can't we be friends now?" said the other, holding him affectionately. "It's what I want. It's what you want". But the horses didn't want it--they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which the riders must pass single file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the

carrion, the Guest House, that came to view as they issued from the gap and saw the Man beneath; they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices "No, not yet" and the sky said, "No, not there".<sup>22</sup>

## II

Of course it (the Raj) was a mirage. The British and the Indians saw a mirage, they lived a mirage and they both loved that mirage. They clung to it and were shattered to discover that, after all, like so much in India and its history, it was just a mirage, but it had the intensity, a fascination and gripping character of a mirage.<sup>23</sup>

-- Listener, 22 March, 1984

The expression of Merrick's perverse masochism, which is emblematised in the role he played in driving a non-commissioned Indian officer formally under the command of Colonel Layton, to suicide, and above all in his treatment of Hari Kumar, is the supreme antithesis of everything that the paternalism of the Raj stood for. It is, indeed, a demonic demystification of the assumption that the white ruler is a mother and a father to his coloured subjects. Hari sums up Merrick's rationale of conduct in the following words: .rm50

It wasn't enough to say he was English and I was Indian, that he was a ruler and I was one of the ruled. We had to find out what

that meant. He said people talked of an ideal relationship between his kind and my kind, they called it comradeship. But they never said anything about the contempt on his side and the fear on mine that was basic, and came before any comradely feeling...He said you couldn't buck this issue,.. that relationships between people were based on contempt, not love, and that contempt was the prime human emotion because no human being was ever going to believe all human beings were born equal. If there was an emotion almost as strong as contempt it was envy. He said a man's personality existed at the point of equilibrium between the degree of his envy and the degree of his contempt.

(*The Day*, pp. 357-360)

This doctrine of personality and inter-racial relations has a tremendous disruptive potential as it completely dismantles the imperial dictum of *Mai Baap* -- "The true corruption of the English is their pretence that they have no contempt for us." (*The Day*, p.358). This subversive notion assimilates the colonial enterprise into its very opposite and makes its opposite the sole determinant of inter-cultural bondings. Scott, however, is quick to limit this transgressive tendency to the lower middle class -- a class to which Merrick belongs:

Can't the fool see that nobody of the class he aspires to belong to has ever cared a damn about the empire and that all that God-The-Father-God-The-raj was a lot of insular middle-and lower-class shit

(*DS*, p.258)

Even as the English upper class displaces the corruption in the colonial body as a whole to the lower rungs of its social ladder, the latter reveals a knowledge of the dominant race which must be repressed if it is to perpetuate its rule.

Merrick's official view of life revolves around the twin pillars of racial contempt and envy, and everything else is looked upon as a delusion -- particularly, everything the Laytons believe and what the martyrdom of Teddie Bingham represents.

...for a moment...I fell for it...the whole thing. Devotion, sacrifice, self-denial. A cause, an obligation. A code of conduct, a sort of final oral definition...what we're here for--people living among each other in an environment some sort of God created. The whole impossible nonsensical dream.

(*The Day*, p.475)

The English Superintendent of Police is gifted with a keen and sharp perception, a perception that immediately sizes up the subversive potentiality of another person's reality and subsequently manipulates this reality to his advantage. He shrewdly appropriates the incidents associated with the tragic death of Teddie Bingham to highlight the short-sightedness of the imperial ideal of service and loyalty to the natives, and uphold the validity and appropriateness of his own philosophy of racial hatred. The spur-of-the-moment improvisation that Merrick makes is not

as significant as his opportunism. He never misses a chance, however slight it may be, of forging his way into the centre of the Anglo-Indian society; a long cherished desire which finds its ultimate realisation through his marriage with Susan, who is significantly, Colonel Layton's daughter and Teddie Bingham's widow. Thus, his subversive activities do not aim at escaping from the social structures he despises; they rather attempt to reinscribe him within these very structures. As such, his deviant behaviour falls into Jonathan Dollimore's category of "transgressive re-inscription".<sup>24</sup> A "transgressive re-inscription", according to him, finds expression through the inversion and subversion of the pre-existing institutions and in the process seeks to establish the centrality of the transgressor within them.<sup>25</sup>

Merrick's official view of the relationship between the English and the Indian is obsessively aware of the necessity of having static lines of racial demarcation:

It is essential, isn't it? You have to draw the line. Well, its arbitrary. Nine times out of ten perhaps you need to draw it in the wrong place. But you need it there, you need to be able to say: there's the line. This side of it is right. That side is wrong. Then you have your moral terms of reference. Then you can act. You can feel committed. You can be involved. Your life takes on something like a shape. It has a form. Purpose as well, maybe. You know who you are when you wake up in the morning.

*(The Day, p.P260)*

Merrick commits the unforgivable sacrilege of transgressing the very racial boundary to which he attaches so much importance by disguising himself as a Pathan. Any act of cultural cross-dressing in the colonial context has an undefined disruptive potential, for it willingly blurs the rigid line segregating the coloniser from the colonised; a line which the imperial enterprise deems imperative to maintain. This crime is even more outrageous if it is committed by an Englishman. Perkins' harsh condemnation of those Englishmen who adopt the fashion of other countries, though it refers to the Renaissance is equally applicable in the colonial context: "This one sinne", he observes, "so common among us, that it hath branded our English people with the blacke mark of the vainest and most newfangled people under heaven'".<sup>26</sup> To wear the apparel of another culture is to adulterate the integrity of one's own race. As such, Merrick epitomises and promotes contemporary forces of imperial subversion.

Colonial stability depended largely on the races remaining firmly fixed to their 'divinely' allotted places in the social hierarchy. The idea of a god-given nature and destiny has the logical corollary that nothing so essentially predetermined could and should ever change. But Merrick, by dressing in Indian clothes opens up the possibility for such a transformation, leading to the



realisation that racial identity and differences are not the product of a pre-ordained order. Rather, they are the contingent basis of an oppressive social structure. From being a divine law inscribed essentially in each of God's subjects, cultural identity and differences are thus shifted irretrievably into the domain of socially conditioned practices which can be contested. Shorn of the racial metaphysics, the English are stripped of their power of prescription. As metaphysics collapses into the social, the imperial presence on the Indian subcontinent is rendered more and more precarious and vulnerable.

"In the obsession with dress and what it signified socially", Lisa Jardine reminds us, "we witness contemporary tensions and struggles between classes, between residual and emergent cultures..."<sup>27</sup> Merrick's disruptive act of racial cross-dressing is symptomatic of an impending colonial collapse -- a collapse whose inevitability forces Susan to shriek in fear and panic at the sight of her husband disguised as a Pathan and again on seeing her young son dressed in Indian attire. The fearful apprehension of the possibility that native culture may contaminate the sanctity of the English race is epitomised in Barbie's paralyzing shock on finding that her local students have coloured the face of Christ not in the angelic white usually associated with Him, but with the blue of Krishna. She hides the blue

crayon so that the children may not repeat the act of cultural mingling which provides the colonised with a moment of appropriation in which the power and culture of the coloniser can be usurped. In the anxiety generated by the possibility of the breaking down of cultural boundaries, the far reaching effects of historical transformation can be read. Scott seems to prophesy the menacing cultural emergence of the once subjugated race which threatens to turn the existing equation of power inside out. This emergence is best expressed today in the literary phenomenon known as Salman Rushdie who has appropriated the gift of his erstwhile ruler, the English language, to his own advantage, displaying an excellence that even the English race cannot match. Scott seems to suggest that perhaps one day Parvati, the daughter of Hari and Daphne, will make her presence felt on the western cultural scene, leaving the white audience dumbfounded and spellbound. The predicament of a post-colonial Englishman confronted with such a cultural transformation finds expression in the instability of an individual watching a spectacle unfolding before him; an onlooker always exists on the periphery of the performance.

But who is responsible for this civilisational chaos (the chaos is of course from the English point of view)? Scott provides us with an answer to this question through Guy Perron's rejection of Emerson's philosophy of history

which conceptualises society as a wave. The wave moves onward, but the water of which it is composed does not. The same particle does not rise from the valley to the ridge. Its unity is phenomenal. The persons who make up a nation today die next year, and their experience dies with them. "Emerson", he says, "failed to see that there were exceptions. People like you and me" (*DS*, p. 256). He goes on to explain that when the wave moves forward, people like himself and Rowan, both upper-class Englishmen educated at Chillingborough, move with it, while people like Merrick, with their limited outlook on class and institutions, fail to move and "get drowned" (*DS*, p.258). Merrick is indeed made to drown in the narrative of Scott's revision of the Raj only to surface as a scapegoat held responsible for the dissolution of the Empire and the post-colonial state of affairs.

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11. Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire* (University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1993) p.122.
12. E M Forster, *op. cit.*, p.182.
13. Jenny Sharpe, *op. cit.*, p.122.
14. Sara Suleri, *op. cit.*, pp.132-148. Sara Suleri makes this remark only with regard to Forster's novel, but I am extending it to cover Scott as well.
15. *ibid.*, p. 16

16. *ibid.*, p. 17
17. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *op. cit.* In this article she demonstrates how the three categories of race, class and gender are closely interwoven and simultaneously at work in the colonial context.
18. Rustom Bharucha, 'Forster's Friends', Quoted in Sara Suleri, *op. cit.*, p.134.
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## CONCLUSION

...the affair that began on the evening of 9th August 1942, in Mayapore, ended with the spectacle of two nations in violent opposition, not for the first time nor as yet for the last because they were then still locked in an imperial embrace of such long standing and subtlety it was no longer possible for them to know whether they hated or loved one another, or what it was that held them together and seemed to have confused the image of their separate destinies.<sup>1</sup>

--*The Jewel in the Crown*, 1966

Although Paul Scott's epic account of the last days of the British in India has generally been read as a critique of imperialism, it is possible to argue, as Jenny Sharpe has done, and I have attempted to demonstrate in this dissertation, that the *Quartet* is indeed "a mourning for the loss of empire that masquerades as self-criticism".<sup>2</sup> The "Raj nostalgia mode" in which Sharpe places these novels was possibly an indirect consequence of Britain's growing realisation from the nineteen sixties onwards, of its shrinkage of stature in global politics following its territorial withdrawals, and even within its own territory a sense of being overwhelmed by the people of other races and regions.

In the post-colonial world, the category of race is no longer considered as transparent, that is, the older paradigm of white superiority cannot be explicitly defended any more. Thus the Powellism of the sixties and seventies<sup>3</sup>

had an ambivalent response among the British intellectuals who could not openly endorse it. The publication of Scott's over-2000 page sequence of four interconnected novels temporally spans the formation of "the new empire within Britain".<sup>4</sup> The accelerating pace of Asian immigration into Britain during this period seemed almost to reverse the colonial situation; instead of the white man entering the subcontinent, it is the erstwhile 'colonised' who now threatened to force his way into the territory of his former ruler. "Britain", writes Salman Rushdie, "is in danger of entering a condition of cultural psychosis in which it begins once again to strut and posture like a great power while in fact its power diminishes every year. The Jewel in the Crown is made these days, of paste".<sup>5</sup>

It was psychologically necessary therefore at this moment of ruin to make an attempt to preserve the memory of splendour, to evoke the past of an imperial 'greatness. In fact, Paul Scott's *Quartet* is an indirect attempt to resurrect "the civilizing mission from its ashes".<sup>6</sup> The depiction of the barbaric attack of Indian peasants on an innocent white woman, the pivotal incident of Scott's narrative, is a re-conformation of the familiar imperial projection of the East-West encounter as a maniacal battle between barbarism and civilisation.

In the colonial days, the identity of the non-white people could be easily submerged under the broad collectivity of a subjugated race, but in post-colonial Britain it was no longer possible to silence their self-assertions as individual citizens of English society. Such an assertion displaces British centrality in its own country as the emergent cultures of other regions of the world seem to appropriate the heritage of England, and leave their indelible imprint on English society. The powerlessness and physical frailty of the white community threatened by the alien ethos of the immigrant communities is conjured up by Paul Scott in the image of a white girl running in the darkness.

The precarious position of the British in post-colonial England whose cultural hegemony is slipping away, has a point of comparison with the vulnerability of the British in the Indian subcontinent even in the heyday of the colonial era. From Macaulay's fear of touching India (see Chapter II) we have many instances of the British ruler's traumatic realisation of the inadequacy of the imperial structures of control in grappling with this 'intransigent' civilisation. Such a terror translates itself into Kim's misread messages, the unfathomed negativity of the Marabar Caves and the dubiety of the conflicting histories of the Bibighar Gardens.



"From the early travelogues in the seventeenth century", argues Sara Suleri, "to the proliferation of Anglo-Indian fiction in the nineteenth, the dominant western metaphor for India suggests a spatial intransigence, or a geography so figural that -- like the Marabar Caves -- it can be read by Western eyes only after its transmutation into a threadbare and dangerous literalism."<sup>7</sup> The story of colonialism thus offers "nuances of trauma that cannot be neatly partitioned between coloniser and colonised."<sup>8</sup>

Scott plays a strategic role in establishing the terrain for recent revisions of Britain's imperial past by placing the figure of rape at the centre of the Raj revival. This trope of sexual violence associates the emergence of Indian culture with the violation of something pristine in British culture, and what is a better trope for conveying this sacred essence of a culture than its woman? By attempting to manage a crisis in British culture through the circulation of the violated body of an English woman, Scott gives a greater continuity to the colonial discourse of rape which has its roots in the mutiny of 1857<sup>9</sup>, and in this way he also makes the racial fear it represents appear natural. But Salman Rushdie poignantly observes. "... if a rape must be used as the metaphor of the Indo-British connection, then surely in the interests of accuracy, it should be the rape

of an Indian woman by one or more Englishmen of whatever class..."<sup>10</sup>

It is true that colonial intrusion has traditionally been represented by the subjugated people through the metaphor of rape -- the ravished woman standing in a metonymous relationship with the violated land. But Scott's reversal of the aggressor-victim roles in his novel (as in Forster before him, although in his case the entire episode could be perceived as a delusion) substantiates my thesis that it was a relationship of mutual disempowerment, where the victor and the vanquished, the subjugating and the subjugated cultures could not always be neatly separated.

Today, imperialism is often looked upon as a dark chapter in the history of the human race but Scott does not criticise the concept per se, though he accepts that the various acts of wanton brutality were not desirable. He exonerates the upper class English fraternity from the burden of colonial guilt by relegating the corruptions within the colonial body to its periphery, implicating in the process, both the woman and the lower middle class. "Again, while Scott", writes Benita Parry, "knows the other side of the underneath, and uncovers the British-Indian association, the uneasy gratifications, the interplay of aggression and submission, of domination and rebellion, his treatment of the devious and the deviant is too clinical, as

if he might be distancing himself from a source of contamination."<sup>11</sup> The Grammar school educated Englishman, Ronald Merrick, whose homosexuality emblematises the brutality with which the colonial enterprise emasculated the Indian subcontinent, is the chosen one for the racial antagonism generated by the violence with which two disparate races are yoked together. At the end of the novel, when Merrick's war-dismembered body is further fragmented as if to mirror the deformities of his personality, justice appears to be done, as the culprit is punished. Merrick's unmanly behaviour, a behaviour taken to be representative of his class, is singled out as one of the causes for the decline of the empire. In this way, Scott traces the moral decline of the ideal of imperial benefaction to the corruption of Victorian manliness.<sup>12</sup>

The presence of the white female on the subcontinent not only stabilises the inherent contradictions of colonialism, but also threatens to expose them. Scott therefore quickly counteracts the disruptive activities of the English women by scapegoating them in this narrative as victims held responsible for the breaking down of colonial hierarchy. It is Mildred, the typical Anglo-Indian housewife who commits the sacrilege of transforming the 'rose garden', a universal symbol of love and innocence, into a 'tennis court' battleground for the mortal combat of

contesting races; it is Daphne who, through her disruptive act of attempting to establish an inter-racial association with Hari Kumar, commits the unforgivable mistake of trampling upon the 'rose garden'. Again, it is the missionary woman Barbie, who unwittingly passes the allegorical picture of "The Jewel in Her Crown", which stands for the monumental vision of the empire, into the artificial hands of Ronald Merrick -- the dark side of the colonial mentality. Even the liberalism of Miss Crane is revealed to be a hollow sham as it is firmly grounded in the belief of her racial superiority. She could not find God in India because she was looking for a Western deity and did not see Shiva dancing in his cosmic circle of flames or the sleeping Vishnu looking as if he might at any moment awaken. All these acts of omission and commission performed by the women, in an insidious way, turn out to be expensive in terms of the durability of the empire, as they contribute to its final dissolution.

Though the white woman is marginalised in the colonial discourse, she is also re-centred as her brutalized corpse is appropriated by such a discourse to sanction the superiority of the white race and legitimise its rule. It is in this context that the figurative use of Daphne's rape at the hands of the Indian natives becomes a heavily charged trope, even if this means the reversal of the generally

accepted view of colonialism which authorises the English claim of ownership through a feminisation of the colonial body. The carrying across of signification from a sexually violent act to the imperial conquest calls attention to the inevitable gendering of white authority. This tropological representation does not however elevate the 'coloniser' to an icon of absolute power, for the 'veiled bride of the East' exercises a peculiar power over him as she continues to defy his advances (see Chapter II). Her veil is a reminder of his inability to possess her completely. But Scott renders the position of the colonising presence on the subcontinent even more vulnerable by not only reversing the gender position of this imperial paradigm, but also dismantling it altogether.

The homoerotic encounter between Merrick and Hari suggests that the imperial gaze is directed not at the inscrutability of the 'veiled bride' alone but to the greater sexual ambivalence of the 'effeminate groom'. The colonial exchange in this way is depicted as being partitioned between the contesting strength of rival men. As a result, the monolith of power gives way to a fluidity, that is, to the discursive transfer of power from one culture to another. The disempowerment of the English race and the waning of its cultural hegemony in today's world has led to the dismantling of the boundaries between

'domination' and 'subordination'. The physical frailty of the white community faced with the menacing emergence of the supposedly subjugated race is artistically encapsulated in the images of the bowman and the white girl running in darkness with which Scott's *Quartet* closes:

Fleeting moments, these are held a long time  
in the eye,  
The blind eye of the ageing poet,  
So that even you, Gaffur, can imagine.  
In this darkening landscape  
The bowman lovingly choosing his arrow,  
The hawk outpacing the cheetah,  
The girl running with the deer.

(DS, p.719)

## REFERENCES

1. Paul Scott, *The Jewel in the Crown* (Pan, London, 1966) p.9.
2. Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993) p.144.
3. Enoch Powell viewed the growing immigration of Asians and blacks sceptically. According to him, the Afro-Asian citizens were detachments of communities in the West Indies and India and Pakistan encamped in certain areas of England and this group of people threatened the cultural purity of the white race. This racial attitude which was prevalent in England during the nineteen sixties and seventies is generally referred to as Powellism.
4. Salman Rushdie, 'The New Empire within Britain', in *Imaginary Homelands*, Quoted in Jenny Sharpe, *op.cit.*, p.142.
5. Salman Rushdie 'Outside the Whale' in Annie Greet, Syd Harrex and Susan Hosking (ed.) *Raj Nostalgia* (Flinders Press, Adelaide, 1992) p.114.
6. Jenny Sharpe, *op. cit.*, p.144.
7. Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992) p.6.
8. *ibid.*, p.5.
9. Jenny Sharpe in her study of the figure of women in colonial texts shows that the trope of a native raping a white woman has its origin in the racial memory of the mutiny of 1857 and it surfaces only during the times of crisis in the colonial authority. See Jenny Sharpe, *op.cit.*, pp.2-3.
10. Salman Rushdie, 'Outside the Whale', *op.cit.*, p.113.
11. Benita Parry, 'Paul Scott's Raj', *South Asian Review* Vol.8, No.4, July/October 1975, p.360.
12. Jenny Sharpe, *op.cit.*, p.155.

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