Indian Studies in American Fiction

EDITED BY

M. K. Naik
S. K. Desai S. Mokashi-Punekar

Karnatak University, Dharwar

and

Macmillan India

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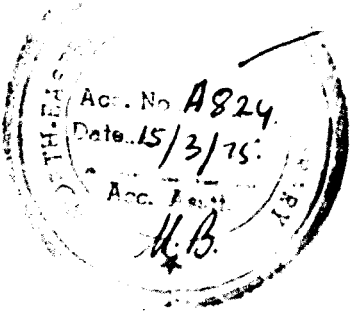

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Foreword

Though English has been taught in this country for more than a century and a quarter, the study of American Literature is a rather recent development, almost less than a generation old. The introduction of the literature of the United States in the English Syllabi of our Universities has naturally resulted in increasing critical activity directed towards the study of American writers and their works. Numerous miscellaneous collections of critical essays on American literature by Indian scholars have appeared so far.

The distinguishing feature of the present volume edited by Dr. M. K. Naik and his colleagues in the English Department of this University is that it focusses attention on one prominent area of American literature—viz. fiction, and offers a substantial body of criticism by renowned scholars on many major American novelists and short story writers. This volume is the third in the impressive research series launched by the Department of English, Karnatak University in 1967, and judging by the reception accorded to the two previous ventures, the present collection also holds out a promise of an equal measure of success. I therefore feel extremely happy to write this foreword to this book and sincerely wish Dr. Naik and his colleagues every success in their research endeavours in the days to come also.

KARNATAK UNIVERSITY,
DHARWAR-3,
APRIL, 1974.

M. Jayalakshammanni,
Vice-Chancellor.

Preface

This volume is the third in the Research Series undertaken by the Department of English, Karnatak University, in collaboration with like-minded scholars from other Indian universities. The general theme of this volume is American fiction, and as many as twenty American novelists and short story writers from Hawthorne to Harper Lee are represented here. The fact that Hawthorne was born in 1804, and Harper Lee in 1926, should demonstrate the range and scope of the volume. A few omissions have, of course, remained, but those who have the experience of successfully planning and compiling a collection of this nature know the different kinds of difficulties (some of them rather formidable) involved. In spite of this, it can be claimed that most of the major American masters of fiction have been covered in this volume. Our contributors range from Madras to Muzaffarpur and the volume, as a whole, tries to be representative of the response of Indian scholars to American fiction.

We are deeply grateful to the following for their cooperation: our distinguished contributors from all over India who made this project a reality; Dr. A. S. Adke, our former Vice-Chancellor, Smt M. Jayalakshammanni, who has recently succeeded him and Shri S. S. Wodeyar, Registrar, Karnatak University, for their constant encouragement; Shri C. S. Kanavi, Director, Extension Service and Publications, Karnatak University, for his valuable guidance; and The Macmillan Company of India Ltd for once more collaborating with us in our research programme. We must also record our gratitude to Smt M. Jayalakshammanni, Vice-Chancellor, for her generous foreword, and thank Dr. C. V. Venugopal for compiling the index.

M.K.N.
S. K. D.
S. M. P.

KARNATAK UNIVERSITY,
DHARWAR

The Dark is Light Enough: Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*

L. S. R. KRISHNA SASTRY

I

Hearing in England that Thackeray had read aloud the conclusion of his *The Newcomes* with no apparent feeling, Hawthorne, recalling his own experience five years earlier, said, ' I cannot but wonder at his coolness, and compare it with my own emotions, when I read the last scene of *The Scarlet Letter* to my wife, just after writing it—tried to read it rather, for my voice swelled and heaved, as if I were tossed up and down on an ocean as it subsides after a storm. But I was in a very nervous state then, having gone through a great diversity of emotion, while writing it, for many months. I think I have never overcome my own adamant in any other instance.'

The Scarlet Letter shakes the reader to his roots, as indeed it did its author, because it has, as Paul Elmer More says, sealed up the fountain of tears. It is not, however, sentimental or moral, but tragic—tragic as only a few masterpieces in literature are. It is as deeply moving as it is perfect in its art. It engages the reader's emotions fully and also creates in him that ' calm of mind ' after the emotions have had their sway. Henry James points to its ' indefinable purity and lightness of conception, a quality which in a work of art affects one in the same way as the absence of grossness does in a human being '. This, for James, is the secret of its ' inexhaustible charm and mystery '. ' It has about it that charm,' he adds, ' very hard to express, which we find in an artist's work the first time he has touched his highest mark—a sort of straightness and naturalness of execution, an unconsciousness of his public, and freshness of interest in his theme.' It is here that one finds a climactic concentration of the different materials that Hawthorne was for a long time handling.

The characters and the conflicts that trouble their souls are

Indra—The Mind of Edgar Allan Poe

S. MOKASHI-PUNEKAR

I

Those who complacently trusted Griswold's canard that Edgar Allan Poe died in a gutter (in Baltimore on October, 7, 1849) did not pause to complain of the deplorable state of Baltimore gutters. They were sure Poe belonged there. In a year's time, America launched its age of Transcendental Renaissance. Had he lived, Poe, the pagan aesthete, would have been hopelessly out of place in the solemn company of Emerson, Whitman and Thoreau. During Poe's lifetime of about forty years, he earned the reputation of a dissolute dandy who had the further audacity to galvanise Egyptian mummies to life only to cheat them at cards. Even as a piece of historical necessity, Poe's death was just right in its timing: only a dog's death would have cleansed the American air of Poe's mummy odour so that the transcendental purities of Emerson, Hawthorne and Whitman could flourish without a rival.

Poe's reputation even as an artist, poet and ideologist, has suffered. Those who could appreciate him, the French symbolists for instance, have been accused of not knowing English enough, precisely on the evidence of their having liked Poe. The few Poe pietists who have donated sums of money to preserve the Poe monuments are mostly non-literary people. In other words, Poe is either uncritically adored or rankly neglected by high-minded literary critics.

This paper makes no attempt to vindicate Poe the poet. It examines Poe's *Tales* as evidence of his genius; and further it will scrupulously avoid dwelling on the structure of Poe's Tales, about which a good deal of appreciation has been expressed on all hands. The paper will examine, in other words, Poe's kind of pagan Transcendentalism. It will demonstrate that Poe was a far subtler thinker than the later transcendentalists; and that, but for the specific reason that the latter communicated themselves within the confines of a

The Isolato in *White Jacket*

NALINI V. SHETTY

A recurring figure in the fiction of Herman Melville is that of the alienated and isolated man who occupies varying degrees of prominence in the unfolding narrative. The isolation may be self-inflicted, or forced upon him by the society he lives in. Either way this figure had a potent hold on the imagination of Herman Melville. In *Moby Dick*, describing the crew of the *Pequod*, Melville gave this figure of alienation a title—the isolato:

> They were nearly all islanders . . . ' Isolatoes ' too, I call such, not acknowledging the common continent of men, but each Isolato living on a separate continent of his own.[1]

In the same novel, Melville was to create his two most famous ' isolatoes ' : Ishmael and Ahab.

In 1850, one year before *Moby Dick*, *White Jacket* was published. The isolato in this novel is the hero-narrator, White Jacket, whose sense of alienation from his man-of-war world is to a certain extent symbolised by the distinctive jacket he has concocted for himself. There is no room for doubt that at the outset of the voyage, alienation from his fellow seamen is deliberately courted by White Jacket. Very much on the defensive and with no reason given for it, White Jacket announces:

> For I had not been long on board ere I felt that it would not do to be intimate with everybody . . . Indeed I was not at all singular in having but comparatively few acquaintances on board, though certainly carrying my fastidiousness to an unusual extent.[2]

Clad in his jacket, the numerous pockets stored against a seaman's needs, White Jacket exults in his self-sufficiency against the weather and the world.

Besides the distinctive apparel which Melville gives his hero

Moby Dick

K. VISWANATHAM

See nations slowly wise and meanly just
To buried merit raise a tardy bust.
DR JOHNSON

We have little more to say in reprobation or recommendation of this absurd book.

The Athenaeum, 25 October 1851.

Moby Dick is one of those rare works of literature that have a capacity for growth through some inner vitality which increases with time.

LEON HOWARD

A poem may appear to mean very different things to different readers and all those meanings may be different from what the author thought he meant.

T. S. ELIOT

I had some vague idea while writing it that the whole book was susceptible of an allegoric construction.

MELVILLE: Letter to Sophia

Ego non baptiso te in nomine—but make out the rest yourself.

MELVILLE: Letter to Hawthorne

An allegorical meaning may lurk here.

Moby Dick, Chapter 90

Nothing can be stated about *Moby Dick* except that it is a contest.

E. M. FORSTER: *Aspects of the Novel*

People will not realise how little conscious one is of these things [symbols]; how one flounders about. They want us to be so much better informed than we are. If critics could only have a course on writers' *not* thinking things out.

E. M. FORSTER

I

Moby Dick is said to be the greatest American novel. One hesitates to call it a novel, and to label it American is to dwarf its greatness. Those who have not made clear to themselves what

The Central Theme in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

RAMESHWAR GUPTA

Different scholars have read different themes into *Huckleberry Finn*[1] and all may be right in their own way. But I doubt if anybody strikes the mark. Everybody seems to be hovering about the centre, at times even reaching very near it, but then somehow suddenly withdrawing from it.

For V. S. Pritchett[2] it is 'one of the funniest books, a comic masterpiece'; but most readers have found its mounting suspense of interest elsewhere; for him it is pastoral too, pervaded with the emotion of nostalgia, 'which floods all really American Literature'; but Twain was too much of a modern to bank too much upon the past, we know. One might maintain, as some do, that the essential theme of the novel is the indictment of the moral basis of society or that, as Gilbert M. Rubenstein[3] maintains, it is the inhumanity of man to man; and, inversely, the brotherhood of mankind; but one should wonder if it wouldn't be too facilely burdening a work of art with morality. Rather, Leslie Fiedler[4] would read the book as a wish-fulfilment of homosexual miscegenation. Moreover, it is reading a situation simply in the light of man vis-à-vis society, and no total view of theme could ignore that other aspect, namely, man vis-à-vis the Universe, allegorised by the river, and, by my reading, a more significant thing. Richard P. Adams[5] argues that the novel's theme is 'the growth of an individual personality'—Huck's growth; but I doubt if Huck grows at all. I know it is too controvertible a statement; but as far as I see Huck ever remains the same Huck. Predicaments come and cause conflicts in his mind; he argues; and certainly not in a childish but in an adult fashion, but his decisions are a foregone conclusion; throughout, he retains his clairvoyance—the unspoilt vision; natural, instinctive preference of the noble to the ignoble: 'Providence always did put the right words

Time in *Huckleberry Finn*

S. K. DESAI

This article is an attempt to work out a hint in W. H. Auden's little, but very perceptive, essay, 'Huck and Oliver'. Auden, while talking about Huck's amazing stoicism, says:

> ...and yet one side of the stoicism is an attitude towards time in which the immediate present is accepted as the immediate present; there is no reason to suppose that the future will be the same, and therefore it does not, perhaps, have to affect the future in the same kind of way as it does here.[1]

Auden is mainly concerned with making a few general statements about the European attitude to life and the American as evidenced in *Oliver Twist* and *Huckleberry Finn* respectively, with a view to bringing about a clearer understanding between America and Great Britain. He succeeds, however, in making us look at *Huckleberry Finn* from a fresh point of view, and here in this article I have, being stimulated by Auden's remark about Huck's attitude towards time, tried to focus my attention on time in *Huckleberry Finn* and examine various aspects of the novel, thematic, structural and stylistic, with particular reference to the attitude to time that underlies the novel.

I

In order to get a fairly clear idea of a writer's theory of time as embodied in a particular work, we should, I think, examine his attitude to various aspects of it—his attitude to eternity, to the past, to the present, to the future, to the experience of time (that is, to use Bergson's or Virginia Woolf's terms, the external and internal time) and their possible interrelations. We do not know whether Mark Twain had a conscious theory of time, as, say, Marcel Proust or Virginia Woolf had, though, as Bernard DeVoto points out, one of the ideas that obsessed

The Draught from *The Golden Bowl*: The Impact of Europe on American Character in Henry James's Fiction:

M. K. NAIK

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth

These well-known lines from Keats could almost be the motto of Henry James's major American characters. They all long for a draught of vintage cooled in the deep-delved earth of ancient Europe. It is a draught from the 'Golden Bowl', which provides the title for one of James's finest novels. The Bowl is described as 'a perfect crystal'; it has gold put upon it 'by some very fine old worker, and by some beautiful old process' which is 'a lost art'. The 'whole thing' is also 'of a lost time'. It is precious, and yet cheap in price, because it is, alas, slightly 'cracked'.[1] In all this, the 'Golden Bowl' could be taken to be a symbol of Europe, rich in ancient tradition and culture, but now, at least partially, fallen 'into the sere, the yellow leaf'.

The draught from this golden bowl is, however, endowed with magic properties. This foaming liquid plays strange tricks on those who drink it. It goes to one wassailer's head, and breaks the heart of another; it builds up the muscles of character in some: in others, it only leaves a spiritual hang-over. It refreshes and nourishes, debauches and even kills, at times!

The aim of the present essay is to arrive at and analyse certain categories of American character as portrayed by Henry James, on the lines indicated above. The proper scope of such a study should indeed be the whole extent of Henry James's fiction, in which the theme outlined earlier is almost always present, directly or indirectly. Such an undertaking cannot, however, be attempted within the modest scope of a paper like this, which will therefore limit its material in two ways. First, it proposes to consider only that part of James's

Cable's Handling of the Political Theme in *The Grandissimes*

R. N. MEHTA

The central canon of George W. Cable's works—the five of them that, according to Edmand Wilson, 'ought to be read by every student of American literature'[1]—is constituted by *Old Creole Days*, *The Grandissimes*, *Strange True Stories of Louisiana*, *The Silent South*, and *The Negro Question*. Of these five, *The Grandissimes* is his only work of extended fiction, the others being either collections of short stories based on his familiarity with Louisiana's history and legend, or of his articles, addresses, and pamphlets on the condition of the Negro as he had seen it in the South in the days of the Confederacy. *The Grandissimes* was Cable's first novel and in fiction it is his most remarkable achievement. Like many other remarkable American books, it is somewhat uneven: one thinks of Cable's preoccupation, obsession almost, in it with dialect speech, for instance; or of the occasional facetiousness of its humour. All the same, it is brilliant and moving in many ways, and, what is more relevant to the purposes of this paper, exhibits a use and an understanding of the political, sociological and cultural issues of the time that is difficult to come across in the contemporary fiction.

Cable places the action of the novel in the New Orleans of the years 1803-4, that is, the period immediately following the transfer of Louisiana by France to the United States, and one of his dominant themes in the novel is the resentment felt by the people of Louisiana and voiced by its most conspicuous and aristocratic section, the Creoles, at the change in the government, and its corollary, the descent of the Americans into Louisiana. There are, of course, many other fine things in it. There is the long-standing feud between two of Louisiana's most ancient families, the De Grapions and the Grandissimes, a feud that in its sudden violence and desperate adherence

In Defence of *Ethan Frome*

SAROJINI B. SHINTRI

It is one of the major ironies of literary history that recognition came late to Edith Wharton, the *grande dame* of American literature, though she has to her credit not less than forty-four publications including verse, short stories, novels and critical articles. She had to wait till the publication of Edmund Wilson's 'Justice to Edith Wharton'[1]. Her first novel of note, *The House of Mirth*, appeared in 1905 and created a flutter in literary circles, as the theme it treated—the problem of young women marrying for money and position—was off the conventional track. Close on its heels came *Ethan Frome*[2] which offers for consideration the conflict between duty and responsibility, resistance and resignation, the misery of extramarital relations and the sense of futility in life. For quite some time, this novel did not attract the attention of the critics; and when it did it had a large share both of praise and blame. In recent years, it has come to be regarded as an American classic. Nonetheless, it is interesting to take note of the adverse—sometimes even unfair—criticism levelled at it. Lionel Trilling criticises the novel mainly on three counts:
First,

> Her impulse in conceiving the story of *Ethan Frome* was not, however, that of moral experimentation. It was ... a purely literary impulse, in the bad sense of the word 'literary'.[3]

Secondly,

> It is as I have said, a very great fault in *Ethan Frome* that it presents no moral issue, sets off no moral reverberation.[4]

And thirdly,

> This is the morality of habit, or the morality of biology. This is Ethan Frome's morality, simple, unquestioning, passive, even masochistic. His duties as a son are discharged

The Bulwark: Dreiser's Peace with the World*

R. N. MOOKERJEE

It is rather unfortunate that, in understanding and evaluating Dreiser's thought, adequate critical attention has not been paid to *The Bulwark* (1946) and *The Stoic* (1947), his last two novels published after his death in 1945. In studies of American literary history, Dreiser usually appears as an uncompromising naturalist, who was always concerned with the animal in man.[1] Such a description would, however, appear to be far from the truth, so far as his final view of man and human life is concerned. This is clearly established by these two novels as well as his other writings during the last few years of his life. The present essay is confined to an examination of *The Bulwark* and Dreiser's view of life as reflected in this novel.

As Dreiser neared the end of his life, he had been gradually coming to regard love and mercy as the only basis of hope for mankind. God, he reflected, may or may not actually exist but in 'the troubled heart of man is this dream of Him.' It is therefore for us as individuals to 'make this dream of a God or what He stands for to us, real, in our thoughts and deeds . . . . . If you wish a loving and helpful God to exist and to have mercy, be Him. There is no other way.'[2] As the war showed no signs of abating, he grew more and more tired and depressed and made an impassioned plea for love and affection. In the two Office of War Information broadcasts he made in 1944 in support of the American war efforts, he renewed his faith in these ideals. He had got over his old prejudices and spoke feelingly of the 'thousands upon thousands of helpless and often heroic Jews', and ended his second broadcast with

*I gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to the Rare Book Library, University of Pennsylvania, for its help and courtesy and permitting me the free use of its vast Dreiser Collection.

A Note on Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*

G. S. BALARAMA GUPTA

Upton Sinclair appears to have suffered considerable critical neglect though, paradoxically enough, he remains one of the most widely read American novelists abroad. This is obvious from the fact that, except Floyd Dell's critical biography (to which, incidentally, an Indian student of American literature finds it almost impossible to have access), there seems to be not a single full-length study of this stunningly prolific writer, and further, not many literary historians have found it necessary to devote more than a couple of lines to him, and that mainly to denounce him as merely a hack writer. While most of Sinclair's critics admire his indefatigable vitality and colossal productivity, they tend to dismiss him as a mere muck-raker and a superior journalist who has produced didactic political potboilers which are no more than fiction-coated tracts.

The proper approach to Upton Sinclair would be to view him as a humanist who was a sincere soul with a firm belief in the perfectibility of man, and so lashed out mercilessly at all the evils of modern life, hoping that some day happiness and justice would be restored to mankind. A trenchant critic of capitalism, which he believed was the arch enemy of social equality and human progress, Sinclair made it his life's mission to expose, to excoriate all forms of sham and organised greed. *Oil*, *King Coal*, *Boston*, *The Brass Check*, *The Moneychangers*, *Wet Parade*, *The Goose-step* and *The Goslings* are just a few of those scores of novelistic attacks which he carried on till his last breath. Whatever else Sinclair's detractors may say against him, even his bitterest critics would not question his sincerity: his entire life was a series of sacrifices for the noble cause of helping his suffering fellow men realise their essential human dignity and rightful happiness.

For the satisfaction of critics who insist on all art being its own end, it may be granted at the outset that Sinclair cannot

Form and Content in the Fiction of Sinclair Lewis

S. M. PANDEYA

I

The problem of understanding the content of realistic fiction in general, and of Sinclair Lewis's in particular, is the problem of understanding its form. The raw material of a literary work may be drawn from myths, histories and other written sources, travels, life around the writer, his impressions of reality, the fantastic inventions of the author's fancy, and so on; but the devices which transmute the raw material into art, the formal patterns imposed upon content, are highly conventionalized things and belong to literature alone. Again, the literary devices that transmute the raw material into meaningful content are finite in number, although an individual writer can always effect necessary permutations and combinations of these devices in order to suit his particular inclination and needs. It is by now an agreed critical axiom that until the suitable literary form has been devised by the author for his material, the content does not fully exist. It follows from this axiom that what the reader encounters in a literary work is not the material in the raw but only the material as shaped and structured by the literary form, the devices. A distinction of this kind is particularly important in approaching a realistic fictional work which uses the contemporary socio-cultural environment as its content. Another primary distinction which the critic of realistic fiction must make concerns the form that fictional narratives take. The structuring of a narrative may be 'comic', 'romantic', 'tragic', or 'satiric'. Each of these primary narrative structures imposes on the content a form peculiar to it; and, therefore, it is wrong to blame a comedy because it is not a tragedy, or a satire because it is not a romance.

It is precisely due to a failure to make these primary dis-

Thornton Wilder: *The Eighth Day*[1]

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

> No literature has ever been so intensely spiritual as ours. I do not venture to call it actually religious, but certainly it has the special intensity of concern with the spiritual life which Hegel noted when he spoke of the great modern phenomenon of the secularisation of spirituality.
>
> —LIONEL TRILLING in *Beyond Culture*

It is only in our century that a T. S. Eliot could have moaned:

> The heavy burden of the growing soul
> Perplexes and offends more, day by day;
> Week by week, offends and perplexes more
> With the imperatives of 'is and seems'
> And may and may not, desire and control.

In spite of the tremendous advancement in science and technology, man's soul has not acquired any euphoria. It continues to probe the evolutionary scheme and struggles to outgrow the shackles of mortality. This refusal of the soul to accept the present situation is the theme of many a modern writer. Has man really reached an impasse? Is our civilisation the highest possible peak in man's evolutionary destiny? Or, do we witness already the beginnings of the process of disintegration? Or, rather, does man stand at the threshold of a new life? Much of modern poetry and fiction seems to be aware of these questions, even if unable to answer them. One of the latest of such literary masterpieces is Thornton Wilder's *The Eighth Day*, an absorbing novel of two families caught in the maelstrom of invisible forces. Wilder projects a moving drama of violence and love, despair and acceptance, but the entire base is spiritual. This is not merely a piece of fiction memorably told; it is actually a pointer to the destiny of mankind in the context of the clash of mysterious forces and obscure forgings towards the future.

The Eighth Day has been a-growing for a long time. Wilder is a very serious writer and he takes his own time to gather the material, experiment with the style and let the tale unfold itself

William Faulkner and the Southern Syndrome

V. R. N. PRASAD

In his Nobel prize acceptance speech (1950), William Faulkner reviews his major concerns as a writer and takes his stand on the side of the 'eternal verities':

> Our tragedy today is a general and universal fear so long sustained by now that we can ever bear it. There are no longer problems of the spirit. There is only the question: when will I be blown up? Because of this, the young man or woman writing today has forgotten the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat.
>
> He must learn them again. He must teach himself that the basest of all things is to be afraid; and, teaching himself that, forget it forever, leaving no room in his workshop for anything but the old verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed—love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice. Until he does so he labors under a curse. He writes not of love but of lust, of defeats in which nobody loses anything of value, of victories without hope and worst of all without pity or compassion. His griefs grieve on no universal bones, leaving no scars. He writes not of the heart but of the glands.
>
> Until he relearns these things he will write as though he stood among and watched the end of man. I decline to accept the end of man. It is easy enough to say that man is immortal simply because he will endure; that when the last ding-dong of doom has clanged and faded from the last worthless rock hanging tideless in the last red and dying evening, that even then there will still be one more sound: that of his puny inexhaustible voice, still talking: I refuse

The Nick Adams Stories and the Myth of Initiation

T. G. VAIDYANATHAN

A proper consideration of the Nick Adams stories has been seriously bedevilled by the current critical orthodoxy surrounding the notion of 'initiation'. The desire to 'initiate' or 'educate' Nick is more apparent in the critics than in his creator who, for most part, is content to let Nick fool around, in and around Michigan, before lighting for the territory ahead —Europe. The reason for this pedagogical obsession is to be sought in the desire of the critics to relate the Nick stories to the early novels, especially *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms*, and see in Nick dim adumbrations of the sensitive but impotant Jake Barnes and the equally sensitive but potent Frederick Henry. A new departure[1] with the same end in view (viz. Nick's 'initiation') has been to see the 'complex unity' of *In our Time* by the simple manoeuvre of converting even non-Nick stories into crypto-Nick stories, thus giving Nick more chances for education. Meanwhile, manful efforts are being made through the columns of *Studies in Short Fiction*[2] to establish the splendid autonomy of the stories and even pieces like 'The End of Something' and 'The Three-Day Blow' which tell the same story, are allowed, like Himalayan peaks, to exist in splendid isolation. But even here the old siren song of initiation is heard with all the sweetness of heard melodies. We must remain thankful that the two parts of 'Big Two-Hearted River' are still seen as parts of the same whole. It is to be hoped that critical ingenuity will not introduce a rift at least here.

'Initiation' was first employed by Philip Young in his early study in 1952 to describe the character of the Nick Adam stories in *In Our Time*, although Edmund Wilson,[3] in his still useful 1939 essay, had already laid the foundations. 'A typical Nick Adams Story,' writes Young, 'is of an initiation.'[4] And later, more definitively, he observes: 'The pattern

The Old Man and the Sea. An Approach to Meaning*

KRISHNA NANDAN SINHA

Writing in *The Paris Review* of Spring, 1954, Hemingway states clearly what he set out to do in his novels. But the implication of the *done* almost always shames the frail, if magnificent, tremors of the original conception. *The Old Man and the Sea* basing itself on a story of fishing and the author's accumulated experience of fishing, takes on the character of scripture, the prophetic stance firmly and clearly revealed in the art. This is explained away by the famous theory of the iceberg: 'I always try to write on the principle of the iceberg. There is seven-eighths of it under water for every part that shows.'[1] In the sea-novel, according to Hemingway's own testimony, 'there is much more than will be read at any first reading.'[2] Commentary on the novel has been diverse and many-splendoured, which has gone a long way to replenish our response to it. Still, like Hamlet, the work cries for more and more illumination. Understanding a great work of art demands rigour, even love, which, like love, returns itself at the maximum level of counter-response.

The Old Man and the Sea springs from a mind that is curiously sublime, curiously comforted, poised between the wondrous plenitude of the world and the black, submerged emptiness of death. The condition of prolonged tension is resolved, leading to renunciation, the disowning of the self, the emptying out of the casual and sensual in human experience. The preoccupation is similar to that of Eliot:

> There is no end, but addition; the trailing
> Consequence of further days and hours,
> While emotion takes to itself the emotionless

* Paper read at a Seminar on American Literature, organised by the United States Information Service and the Ramkrishna Institute of Culture, Calcutta, 1968.

The Grapes of Wrath: A Revaluation

S. T. KALLAPUR

Public popularity has done greater damage to John Steinbeck's reputation as a writer than perhaps to anybody else's in the twentieth century. Students of the Columbia College preferred Steinbeck to Shakespeare. M. A. Farber writes, 'A Columbia study comparing the reading preferences of successful applicants to the college in 1938 and 1966 discloses... that Shakespeare has been displaced by John Steinbeck as top favorite of the incoming students...'[1] This kind of popularity itself makes him suspect with the critics. It is said that he lapses into sentimentality, that his philosophy is naïve and that he depicts characters on the instinctual level only. Admitting all this, *The Grapes of Wrath* is not only artistically successful but philosophically profound. The novel centres round the great and continuing divisions in American society, but there is a serious vein of thought underlying the topical nature of the subject-matter and its local background. Steinbeck has searched broadly for a philosophical framework in which to embody his ideas of the good life and the good society. A study of his novels makes it clear that his most characteristic alternative to the materialism of life in the United States is the spirituality of Hinduism.

But to call *The Grapes of Wrath* philosophically profound is not to say that Steinbeck's best novel is without technical weaknesses. There are heights of excellence side by side with marks of weaknesses like sentimentality, weak characterisation and theatricality. The non-dualistic philosophy *The Grapes of Wrath* advocates, the powerful story it narrates, the great art with which the narrative and intercalary chapters are juxtaposed and integrated, and the number of strategically employed prose styles, like the structural rhythms of the Old Testament in some passages, the staccato prose of some others, the beautifully controlled objective passages of others still, and the earthy speech of the characters which give variety and epic sweep to the novel, have deservedly earned high praise

Isolation and Reconciliation in Malamud's *The Fixer*

G. NAGESWARA RAO

So far the *oeuvre* of Bernard Malamud has generally been studied and evaluated from three distinct points of view. His work has been considered valuable, because he portrays the misery of the Great Depression of the thirties in all its complexity and entirety. His work has been hailed as an excellent specimen of 'minority' literature, because he depicts the miserable predicament of the metropolitan Jews. His work has also been considered important because he represents the subtle suffering of the modern man as a result of his isolation from his true self and alienation from society. These three approaches to Malmud's work provide ample scope for its elucidation and the evaluation of his mind and art, in terms of the much-honoured trends of modern criticism—the realistic, existential and the archetypal.

When we study Malamud's entire output without limiting our investigation to these points of view, we are led to realise one important fact: that the material of Malamud's art (the central theme of his work) is the perennial human struggle to make existence meaningful. All his work, from *The Magic Barrel* to *The Fixer*, reveals different layers of this perennial struggle. The root cause of all this struggle is the endless suffering of man. Malamud's stories reflect the suffering caused by the Great Depression. The tragic aspect of this suffering is that the victims are not responsible for that Depression. They have to endure their lot because they happen to live at that time. In *The Natural*, another dimension of the same inescapable human suffering is presented. Roy Hobbs's relentless struggle to make his life a success is an aspect of the perennial human struggle to make life significant at the level of social success. Tossed between the bewitching temptations of a giant and the chastening love of a pure woman, Roy Hobbs ultimately perishes in his attempt to redeem himself. In *The Assistant*,

Bellow's Measure of Man

NIRMAL MUKERJI

At the centre of Bellow's fictional world lies a desperate search for the answer to the most significant question, 'What is it to be truly human?' Augie's 'axial lines', Joseph's 'ideal construction', and Herzog's 'universal connections' are all attempts at finding the measure of man. Schlossberg, the Yiddish journalist -philosopher of *The Victim*, declares:

> It is bad to be less than human and it is bad to be more than human... Good acting is what is exactly human. And if you say I am a tough critic, you mean I have a high opinion of what is human. This is my whole idea. More than human, can you have any use for life? Less than human, you don't either.[1]

Like Schlossberg, Bellow is a 'tough critic', and it is this 'humanness', neither more nor less, that he has tried to explore in his creative world.

The essential and existential dilemma that has marked our age is one of a chaotic universe threatening the weak and finite man:

> The writers of contemporary existential literature portray man and universe as odd-shaped pieces in some gigantic, meaningless puzzle. Deprived of teleological significance, the human creature is condemned, without hope of escape, to a barren and aimless existence. And the universe, devoid of cosmological design, is but a spinning mass of confusion. Hence, the existential protagonist is a metaphysical misfit, groping blindly in a black world.[2]

Bellow's heroes desperately fight against this bleak nihilism, this death of the spirit. With compelling urgency they strive for some meaningful human values. They are aware of the finitude of man, the limitations which society imposes on man; but in the face of this finitude and in spite of the cringing and

Another Country: The Tensions of Dream and Nightmare in the American Psyche

THAKUR GURU PRASAD

I

James Baldwin's *Another Country*, described by the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* as 'the most exciting book to come out of America in the sixties', belongs to the mainstream of the American tradition as defined by Richard Chase in his momentous study; for, it has that 'certain intrepid and penetrating dialectic of action and meaning', the 'profound poetry of disorder', the romantic 'nihilism' and the 'contradictions' which have shaped 'the most characteristic American fiction'.[1] The story of this 'major novel of love and hate between black and white, man and woman, man and man' is set in the contemporary United States as reflected in the Negro sensibility. As a writer, Baldwin is a typical heir to a peculiarly American line of the family of Western Man. Identifying himself as an American Negro, he has elucidated this point in *The Fire Next Time*. The American Negro 'who remains disinherited, and despised, in a nation that has kept him in bondage for nearly four hundred years and is still unable to recognise him as a human being,'[2] Baldwin claims, 'has the great advantage of having never believed that collection of myths to which white Americans cling; that their ancestors were all freedom-loving heroes, that they were born in the greatest country the world has ever seen, or that Americans are invincible in battle and wise in peace, that Americans have always dealt honourably with Mexicans and Indians or inferiors, that American men are the world's most direct and virile, that American women are pure,'[3] and so forth. The central contradiction springs, however, not so much from the deep chasm between the tall myths and the sordid facts, but more from the realisation that the land where he remains disinherited is the only land where the

To Kill A Mockingbird: Harper Lee's Tragic Vision

R. A. DAVE

To Kill a Mockingbird is quite an ambiguous title, the infinitive leaving a wide scope for a number of adverbial queries—how, when, where, and, of course, *why*—all leading to intriguing speculation and suspense. One is left guessing whether it is a crime-thriller or a book on bird-hunting. Look at it any way, the title hurts the reader's sensibility and creates an impression that something beautiful is being bruised and broken. It is only after he plunges into the narrative and is swept off into its current that he starts gathering the significance of the title. After buying the gift of an air gun for his little son, Atticus says: ' I would rather you shot at tin cans in the backyard, but I know you will go after birds ... but remember, it's a sin to kill a mockingbird.' And when Scout asks Miss Maudie about it, for that is the only time when she ever heard her father say it is a sin to do something, she replies saying:

> ' Your father is right. Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't eat up people's gardens, don't nest in corncribs, they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That's why it is a sin to kill a mockingbird.'

And as the words ' it's a sin to kill a mockingbird ' keep on echoing into our ears, we are apt to see on their wings the mockingbirds that will sing all day and even at night without seeming to take time to hunt for worms or insects. At once the moral undertones of the story acquire symbolical expression and the myth of the mockingbird is seen right at the thematic centre of the story. The streets of Maycomb were deserted, the doors and windows were instantaneously shut the moment Calpurnia sent round the word about the dog, gone mad in February not in August. The dog ' was advancing at a snail's

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