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Coetzee Studies

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Contents

Book Reviews

目　　录

库切研究

泰戈尔研究

比昂松研究

爱沙尼文学研究

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J. M. Coetzee's Australian Realism

Elleke Boehmer

Abstract The essay investigates the implications for J. M. Coetzee's poetics of his shift from an agonistic if in his case highly mediated settler tradition within South African writing, which is part of his literary and imaginative inheritance, towards a self-consciously acquired Australian mode of realist writing, which however is equally mediated, that came with his move to that country in the early 2000s. The essay will further consider how his knowing engagement with the genre or subgenre of settler realism manifests in both his imaginative geographies as a mode at once of disconnection from and of affiliation to what for want of a better word might be called the nation. What does Coetzee's shift between two established subgenres in post/colonial literature, the farm novel or *plaasroman* of South Africa, in his case refracted through a postmodern lens, and Australian realism, equally postmodern and mediated, equally agonistic, tell us about the ways in which the narrative burden of settler history, of which Coetzee is doubly aware, is inflected in his work? The analysis will be sharpened by reading this work alongside the contemporaneous representation of the matter of Australia by two of Coetzee's prominent contemporaries, Peter Carey and Tim Winton: in particular Carey's post-2000 novels *My Life as a Fake* (2003) and *Theft* (2006), and Winton's 2004 *Dirt Music* and his 2008 *Breath*.

Key words J. M. Coetzee; settler realism; mediation

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This essay sets out to investigate the implications for J. M. Coetzee's poetics of his shift from an agonistic if in his case highly mediated settler tradition within South African writing, which is part of his literary and imaginative inheritance, towards a self-consciously acquired Australian mode of realist writing, equally mediated, that came with his move to that country in the early 2000s. The larger question which this investigation will raise, by implication if not always directly, is how a shift of national location within the international republic of letters might impinge on a settler or colonial tradition within postcolonial poetics; or whether it is rather the case that such a strand or tradition operates in cross-border, transnational ways, freely making itself available to writers from different postcolonial domains. [1]

I. Coetzee and the Real

A significant number of the postcolonial novelists and poets who have engaged also in postcolonial literary criticism, often *à propos* of their own practice, Derek Walcott,

Salman Rushdie, Seamus Heaney and J. M. Coetzee among them, have commented on the relationship that is reflected in their poetics between their generic and formal choices as writers, and their sense of history[2], especially national history. In Rushdie's case, for example, the mode of postmodernist magic realism which he developed most famously in *Midnight's Children* (1981), was knowingly composed in order to cut across the oppressive linearity and rationality implied by colonial European historiography, as well as the tradition of nationalist triumphalism which in part emerged from it.[3] Yet even his "critical mimicry of national fiction", as Tim Brennan was among the first to point out, involved a simultaneous if paradoxical longing for overarching narrative continuity—a continuity which in turn signified, though obliquely, a longing for national "form" (Brennan 100).

Taking as a starting point South African-born J. M. Coetzee's representation of his new land Australia, that is, of his Australia as an imaginative prospect, a complex of territorial and national memory, this essay will consider how his engagement with the genre or subgenre of settler realism, both knowing and critical, manifests in both his imaginative geographies as a mode at once of disconnection from and of affiliation to what for want of a better word in his case might be called the nation. What does Coetzee's shift between two established subgenres in post/colonial literature, the farm novel or *plaasroman* of South Africa, in his case refracted through a postmodern lens, and Australian realism, equally postmodern and mediated, equally agonistic, tell us about the ways in which the narrative burden of settler history, of which Coetzee is doubly aware, is inflected in his work? The analysis will be sharpened by reading this work alongside the contemporaneous representation of the matter of Australia by two of Coetzee's prominent contemporaries, Peter Carey and Tim Winton: in particular Carey's post-2000 novels *My Life as a Fake* (2003) and *Theft* (2006), and Winton's 2004 *Dirt Music* and his 2008 *Breath*. The comparative perspective will help to demonstrate how in Coetzee allusions to certain genres and forms have produced, or have made an attempt at producing, even if in a jobbing or perfunctory way, a recognizably Australian world. Whereas in the cases of both Carey and Winton the relationship of land and voice, of (Australian) context and language, is taken as definitive for their writing (as Carey demonstrates, for example, with his ventriloquism of folk hero Ned Kelly's voice in his 2000 *True History of the Kelly Gang*), the question is how the relationship operates in the post-2000 Australian Coetzee.

For the purposes of my critique, realism will be taken as one generic mode amongst others within postcolonial writing (as within other bodies of writing), often though not exclusively bound up with the telling of national stories, the "national longing for form" (Brennan 79 – 117). However, it will also be understood that, despite realism's pretensions to reflect reality, *qua* mode it announces itself as just as unreliable and constructed as other modes, as Coetzee is well aware. In terms of Zizek's definition of the Real, to which I will return, the Real is as inaccessible to realism as is, say, magical realism, in spite of its claims otherwise. This is thinking with which Coetzee has always been fully involved. Realism—or indeed post-realism or ironic realism—is also culturally and historically inflected in different contexts, which involves the writer who moves between regions, and between traditions, in a

differential shift of generic approaches. No matter how self-reflexive the writer about their engagement with realism, to espouse realism in Australia is ultimately different from doing so in South Africa, not least because the writer in this case, Coetzee, is self-consciously approaching the country and its writerly traditions from without.

The decision to adopt the identity of Australian writer before he physically settled in Australia, through his alter ego *Elizabeth Costello*, represented a testing millennial challenge for the writer J. M. Coetzee. Across the greater part of his career, from *In the Heart of the Country* (1976) onwards, Coetzee tended to write at a distance from region and vernacular, and certainly from any form of national affiliation (Coetzee, *White Writing* 7 – 8; *Elizabeth Costello* 199 – 200). His was a famously stripped-down, standardized yet global English voice, that assumed a broadly secular, humanist position. In becoming an Australia-located writer, the demand to write Australia as an Australian, to "make up" Australia, as Costello says, would have seemed to Coetzee a tall imaginative order, equivalent to the assertion of a particularly "strong opinion" with respect to national allegiance (Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello* 12).

Yet, this essay submits, Coetzee has perceptibly grasped this challenge, though, as is to be expected, he has done so in subtle, incremental, often less than obvious (even partially unconvinced) ways, though arguably with a greater directness of reference, a kind of post-fictional reportage, than he has shown with respect to the imagining of South Africa. If in novels like *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), as in *White Writing* (1988), Coetzee was concerned with the "imaginative schemas" through which the arid South African hinterland could be represented, his Australia, I suggest, is similarly conceived as a land of the mind, a space relayed through intellectual schemas. Paradoxically, however, the reality of this new country is in relative terms the more strongly registered and perceived than the imaginary construct of South Africa in Coetzee's oeuvre generally has been, in part by way of diaristic and autobiographical devices. Yet this is a paradox that reduces in magnitude if it is remembered that Coetzee has always been preoccupied with the poetics of the real, including the codes through which realism is at once established and undermined. In fiction after fiction, wherever set, he involves his reader in scrutinizing the operation of these codes of, as Costello has it, "embodying" afresh (Attridge 102; Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello* 9). The difference is that in Australia, a country acquired by conscious adoption rather than through the accident of birth, he has been more noticeably concerned not only to establish the country fictionally as a space, but also to realize it as an actual, recognizable location.

For Coetzee, one of the more important elements of his relationship to Australia, his interest in embracing Australia intellectually, is how that relationship is brought into the consciousness of his novels, from *Elizabeth Costello* onwards, in notational, realist-seeming ways, though also with a certain sense of correctness and obligation, the politeness of the naturalized citizen. Up until its fictionalized yet realistically conceived Dulgannon frogs episode, Australia insinuates itself into *Elizabeth Costello*, for example, either in the form of journalistic outline or sketchy reportage, or as a metonymic visual shorthand, where single precisely conceived images or scenes are made to designate a wider social world. "So real", opines *Elizabeth Costello* meta-textually

of Marijuana's domestic interior in *Slow Man*, which is described via the shorthand referents of white leather furniture, lurid abstract painting, and ceiling fan (Coetzee, *Slow Man* 241 – 2). What this sharply defined, "real-life" interest in Australia signifies, it seems, is that in writing Australia Coetzee has kicked away the more abstract meta-fictional schemas that in South Africa underwrote his visual imagination, and has resorted to a referential vocabulary that at least superficially has a less mediated relationship to the world that is being described.

There are two interlocking forces at work in this matrix of representation, this revised poetics of the real. First, Coetzee appears to be concerned that South African imaginative structures not simply be adapted to provide imaginative scaffolding for his Australian existence. This interest ties to his decision openly to take on Australian citizenship, publicly to profess Australianness, to seek a full-hearted commitment. But he is also concerned with how the reality or context of the Australian nation might "really" be evoked in his work. Taking this a stage further, he is concerned with the quality of the real in Australia and hence also with how it is experienced and evoked. For him, realism is a contingent mode; it cannot simply be accessed regardless of a writer's location; it must be adapted, translated, and remade to suit the context it is being used to address. This interest in grappling with the real in Australia, relates to other interests that have grown in prominence in his more recent, Australian-phase work—the interest in living from the heart, in the full-blooded body, and not only through the simulacra of the literary, to cite from Elizabeth Costello's eighth lesson (Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello* 193 – 226). Significantly, understanding "real-life" through the medium of the body is something that is important to Australian writing more broadly also, as is palpable, for example, in Winton's harsh West Australian realism, in which the human is repeatedly reduced to pre-verbal, "forked creature" states of being.

The concern to grapple with the real is arguably central in South African white writing, too, but there, at least in Coetzee's account, reality perhaps is even less amenable to representation. More so than his Australia, Coetzee's South Africa is overwritten by rival dream topographies and imported, inauthentic languages. It is, in his view, striated by race, by the historical struggle of white writing with black presence, more intensively so than his Australia appears to be, his reference to the Tasmanians in *Elizabeth Costello* notwithstanding. As *White Writing* has it: "The [South African] poet scans the landscape with his hermeneutic gaze, but it remains trackless, refuses to emerge into meaningfulness as a landscape of signs" (Coetzee, *White Writing* 9).

In short, Coetzee in Australia, when compared to his writing in and of South Africa, is interested not just in the operations of embodied realism, as that is a perennial concern, but is interested also in the quality of reality, even in the quality of the real, and hence of its boundaries and breaking points, as these pertain in Australia, as well as more universally. As a symptom of this preoccupation, *Diary of a Bad Year*, the more candid second section especially, is overwritten with words signifying the real or the true: "really," "truth," "truly," "authority effect," as well as "love," the "truth" of "the heart," the "thing itself," "love itself," and the "in-

disputable certainty" invoked by a realist writer like Tolstoy (Coetzee, *Diary of a Bad Year* 234 – 5, 119, 126, 196, 198, 149 – 51, 185).

Pressing the point, Coetzee's interest in the representation of the real in Australia is not so much conveyed as reinforced, from *Slow Man* on, through appropriate, as if bespoke, media: the relative realism of the first part of *Slow Man*, at least up until its self-reflexive chiasmus; the essayistic and diaristic commentaries of *Diary of a Bad Year*, its as if "real" hypotextual underpinnings. Of course, "for all his experimentation", as Derek Attridge writes, Coetzee "has always drawn on the stubborn power of realism, on the vivid representation of a world, external and internal, into which the reader is invited" (Attridge 201). It is an observation that relates directly to *Slow Man* where, in spite of the questions about novelistic convention raised through the introduction of *Elizabeth Costello* as writer-character, the novel is unequivocal in finding that the power of communicating the impact of the real is of primary importance to fiction. What then makes up this real to Coetzee? What form does it take? Drawing on Lacan, Slavoj Zizek in *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* and, especially, *Violence*, as in other work, provocatively suggests that the desert of the real is that which exceeds the reality effects of language even though language is ceaselessly preoccupied with it. The real for Zizek, and by extension also for Coetzee, is that which cannot be produced by, or contained within, verbal artifice, yet, paradoxically, can only be approached through it.

Coetzee's writing the Australian real, or, at least, the reality of Australia, however obliquely so, is, this essay further submits, an interestingly engaged act, perhaps an Australian and not a transnational act, for so nationally disaffected a writer. How the nation is embodied and secured through myth and metaphor has of course been a widespread issue in postcolonial or new national literatures, as also in postcolonial criticism, across several decades. But, whereas Coetzee as a South African writer assumed a circumspect critical position in relation to that process of imaginative embodiment, in Australia his stance is seemingly less objectifying, less concerned to negative what lies before him. Although his coolly rational narrative personae do not go so far as to seek that close intercalation of land, language and being that Tim Winton's Breath, for example, yearns towards, Coetzee himself appears to be aware that in literature Australian reality conventionally comes into being through certain figures, a national imaginary, and he visibly adopts a less than distant though always already translated position in relation to these. Paul Rayment says of himself: "I can pass among Australians. I cannot pass among the French. That, as far as I am concerned, is all there is to it, to the national-identity business: where one passes and where one does not." (Coetzee, *Slow Man* 197) In Australia, Coetzee wishes for his imagination, for his constructions of Australian reality, to pass as something resembling the real thing—which, interestingly for him, means to pass as a realism that is as mediated as ever before.

Several ironies straightaway encroach upon these observations. An obvious one is that, as Australian literary history shows, *White Writing* in Australia has long been as preoccupied with the elusiveness of the Australian real, as South African *White Writing* has been with its alienation from southern African land. It has been as concerned

with the impenetrability of the landscape to European names, with the unavailability of reciprocity between poet and space, with the violence of founding societies and identities upon the alien land[4]. Marcus Clarke writing about the poetry of his nineteenth-century compatriot Adam Lindsay Gordon famously regretted the lack of a perceptual framework, a "language of the barren and the uncouth", through which to interpret "the hieroglyphs of haggard gum trees, blown into odd shapes" (Clarke 50 – 2). From this anxiety over inadequate signification and flawed simulacra, as is well known, emerges Australia's fascination with hoaxes and the ersatz. The "peculiar susceptibility of the Australian literary establishment to fraudulence and fakery", stands to reason when the hunger is for an unobtainable authenticity, in relation to which confections and imitations, "beautiful lies", produce a temporary prophylaxis or passing relief (Huggan 101). The propensity to produce fakes, opines hoaxer Christopher Chubb in Carey's *My Life as a Fake*, is driven by "the terror of being out of date", the tyranny of distance from the place where authenticity resides (Carey, *My Life as a Fake* 29). In his later Theft, talented provincials self-consciously act out the life-styles of famous cosmopolitans. The pivot that both novels turn around is the paradox that the faker understands nothing so closely, and hates nothing so much as a lie. Coetzee's photograph collector Paul Rayment, too, despises fakes and prostheses (Coetzee, *Slow Man* 255).

Another, related irony is that Coetzee has himself in *White Writing* powerfully theorized the condition of colonial anomie, what he describes as the colonial's uneasy, never entirely successful imaginative appropriation of the resistant so-called settled land. At any number of points in *White Writing*, and almost continuously in its Introduction, it could be the nineteenth-century poet in Australia, too, that he is addressing. The intellectual schemas of dystopic South Africa apply equally to Australia's similarly wide, brown land, as can be illustrated with the following adapted quotation from *White Writing*, in which "South Africa" has been replaced with the word "Australia": "In the words he throws out to the landscape, in the echoes he listens for, he is seeking a dialogue with [Australia], a reciprocity with [Australia], that will allow him an identity better than that of visitor, stranger, transient" (Coetzee, *White Writing* 8). Elsewhere he describes the "self-defeating process of naming [Australia] by defining it as non-Europe – self-defeating because in each particular in which [Australia] is identified to be non-European, it remains Europe, not [Australia], that is named" (Coetzee, *White Writing* 164). As in South Africa, so in Australia, the white writer is enclosed within the hermeneutic circle imposed by the foreign, imported tropes through which he attempts to think his allegedly new, "empty" land.

That South Africa and Australia were, for all their differences, white settler colonies within the British Empire, goes some way towards explaining these strong parallels. So, too, does the fact that in imaginative terms they formed part of the dystopian colonial south, as it was constructed in triangulated contrast with the enlightened north on the one hand, and the brave new world of America on the other[5]. This dystopic southernness, too, Coetzee analyses in *White Writing*; and its intriguing intellectual resistances are aspects that may have informed and subtended his interest in immigrating to Australia in the first place. Commenting on contemporary Australia's

pitiless treatment of asylum-seekers, JC in *Diary of a Bad Year* explicitly observes of the country's unpromising mythographic condition: "Australia was never a promised land, a new world, an island paradise offering its bounty to the new arrival. … Life in the Antipodes was meant to be a punishment." (Coetzee, *Diary of a Bad Year* 112)

The point these intersecting ironies are making is that the enigma of Coetzee's arrival in Australia, this "land of whiteness", as a (white) writer, he had to a significant degree scripted in advance (Coetzee, *Slow Man* 13). He had in broad strokes, as if by design, mapped its imaginative topography, its hermeneutic non-visibility, beforehand. The déjà vu of the process, the inevitable always-already, must have been palpable to him, almost too obvious, possibly even laughable, full of the repeats and predictable prat-falls of situation comedy. Or as her sister Blanche tells *Elizabeth Costello*, when referring to the introduction of false humanist ideals to Africa: "It is not just in Zululand that it happened. It happened in Australia too. It happened all over the colonized world, just not in so neat a form." (Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello* 141) With its imaginative topoi prescribed in advance, Australia to a Coetzee interested in the limitations of representing the real, entailed in some ways as difficult a case as did Zululand. The ennui of the always-already, of that which cannot be said because too many attempts have already been made to say it, gives an interesting gloss to the language through which Coetzee refers to Australia in the line-up of his writing from *Elizabeth Costello* through to *Diary of a Bad Year*.

In those places where Australia is designated in *Elizabeth Costello*, a functional, even minimalist referential language is deployed—not so much stripped-down, as Coetzee's language in *Disgrace* and elsewhere has been described, than less-than-literary, ennuyé, perfunctory. It is a language that is, as it were, impatient with the task of description yet concerned with it even so, out of a sense of writerly duty to context. So *Elizabeth Costello* refers, in passing, merely to the "Irish-Catholic Melbourne of her childhood", assuming that this code is sufficient to invoke an entire context (Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello* 179, 125). Though Elizabeth resists Australia's being described as the "far edge" (Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello* 15), in the novel it is still something of a place apart, separated from the rest of the world, as often described, and from the international cross-border realm of the novel, of Elizabeth Costello's transnational peregrinations. Interestingly, none of the lessons is set in Australia. She has led, Elizabeth reflects, "an antipodean life, removed from the worst of history," "quiet," "protected" (Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello* 215; Huggan 66).

In *Slow Man*, the language of minimalist denotation in respect of Australia persists, and is spun out in the form of the thin strand of scene setting running through the novel. The vocabulary designating South Australia is dominated by street names, basic topographical features, and the urban commonplaces of Adelaide. "He will never stride up Black Hill again, never pedal off to the market to do his shopping, much less come swooping on his bicycle down the curves of Montacute." "Years ago he used to cycle through Munno Para on the way to Gawler. Then it was just a few houses dotted around a filling station, with bare scrub behind" (Coetzee, *Slow Man* 25, 241, 151). Magill Road, repeatedly cited, is built up not only as a metonym for

Paul's accident, but also, following on, as a sign of the real, the intrusion of the inconceivable real into the world of the everyday[6].

The language of sere reportage insinuates itself also into the quasi-academic prose of the essays that make up *Diary of a Bad Year*, in particular into the uppermost strand of the first part, "Strong Opinions", JC's jaded pronouncements on public life. Here Australia, specifically Sydney, post-2001, post-Iraq War, is a land of compromised liberal idealism, reduced moral decency, and withering national pride; incorporated into the global economy, yet also marginal to it, increasingly given to exhibiting "the bullying, authoritarian, militaristic strain" to which "western political life" has become susceptible (Coetzee, *Diary of a Bad Year* 120). Australia is thus in several ways a perfect backdrop and foil for protagonist JC's exposition of his "pessimistic anarchistic quietism" as against the "hurly-burly of politics" (Coetzee, *Diary of a Bad Year* 203, 171). Impelled by his interest in speaking a greater truth about public affairs to 'ordinary people' than that supplied by politicians, JC's *ansichten* for the book *Strong Opinions* have shifted him from being a novelist given to dispensing lessons, to being "a pedant who dabbles in fiction" (Coetzee, *Diary of a Bad Year* 125 – 6, 191). Even so, throughout the novel it is the evocation of the real in the manner especially of Tolstoy—how it is done, why it is important, how it is trammeled, what its absolute conditions are—that motivates the narrative, as the real of the emotions also does Anya's story (Coetzee, *Diary of a Bad Year* 192).

II. Reality Effects

Yet Coetzee is not merely concerned with incorporating contemporary Australia, or the mediated real in Australia, into his writing by referencing it, marking its presence or here-ness in denotative terms. He is also, as this section enlarges, concerned to induce even more powerful reality effects than those supplied as part of his vocabulary, by seeming to engage with some of Australia's foundational stories—and by doing so in informed, pre-emptive ways, as well as with his habitual cool correctness. In other words, even before he fully arrived in Australia, and then ever more intensively afterwards, Coetzee participated as if presciently—if still ironically— in its defining intellectual and poetical schemas.

To illustrate, the following paragraphs outline four of the foundational stories to which Coetzee has arguably responded, two of which are closely interlinked, all of which would merit further expansion. There naturally will be others. Analyzed in any number of cultural historical studies, these stories concern the maimed white hero; the fake or forgery; the made-up monster figure who becomes a type of doppelganger; and the tale of new immigration[7].

Dead White Males. Australian literature is famously well-populated with flawed, maimed and dying white heroes, double-sided figures who express a colonial nostalgia for Europe, yet also signify a desire to regenerate as Australian through their suffering and dying (Huggan 88 – 9). (The dead white male tale is closely bound up with the denial of the Aboriginal presence.) Paul Rayment of *Slow Man* unmistakably belongs to this category of maimed heroes-manqué, and bears various characteristic features: a sense of homelessness and hollowness; an interest in the elusiveness of

truth; a tendency to procrastinate; an acceptance of Australia as a place of residence that is comfortable but not a true home. Though *Slow Man* Paul resists getting a move on, to his creator Elizabeth Costello's frustration, he recalls the delusional explorer-figure Voss of Patrick White's mythopoeic 1957 novel (name-checked in Coetzee's *Dusklands*), as he does the damaged sub-heroes of Tim Winton's work, like Luther Fox of *Dirt Music*. Not least among the features he shares with these others is his wound, his severed leg with its "angry colour and swollen look"; there is also his overweening pride, and his sense of living a borrowed life, which he holds in common in particular with Fox, that is, of living through other people and other people's children (Coetzee, *Slow Man* 35; Winton, *Dirt Music* 380 – 1). Yet, as any reader of Coetzee knows, Rayment also shows certain resemblances with other of Coetzee's childless male characters—the magistrate of *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Michael K, even perhaps Friday in *Foe*.

Fraudulence, Real Fakes, Monster Figures. As is evident from Carey's *My Life as a Fake* and Theft, Australian culture's preoccupation with copies of the real is one side of the same coin as its fascination for copies becoming real, and for creations coming back to dog their creators with often fatal effects (Huggan 101). As also in his *True History of the Kelly Gang*, Carey has made a career of remaking his country's definitive stories, so the prevalence of the fraud, the copy and the doppelganger monster in his later work is perhaps predictable. Yet it is also, for all that, an interesting sign of his continuing interest in writing under the banner of Australia, despite his two-decade stay in New York. In *My Life as a Fake* the so-called fake, the Ern Malley equivalent, Bob McCorkle, turns out to be a real person. The novel turns on the conceit that the hoax in fact coincides with the life and work of a real man and poet who then proceeds to haunt and overwhelm the life of his creator, Christopher Chubb, in true *Frankensteinian* fashion. So McCorkle not only steals his child and brings her up as his own, but also succeeds in writing more innovative and accomplished poetry than Chubb's, though, gallingly to Chubb, in the manner of the mocking modernist pastiche he first initiated. *Theft* represents a further development of this to-Carey-fascinating theme of true frauds and fraudulent truths. The tale of Butcher Bones with its recreation of a lost Jacques Liebowitz, which is eventually passed off as an original, is narrated by the twin voices of Butcher and his "damaged" brother Hugh, another monstrous figure. Hugh, who is in many ways as involved in the making of the artist's art, and his life, as the artist is, functions in the novel as an imperfect copy of his brother, though he bears a clear eye for the grey area separating truth from fake.

To introduce Coetzee to the theme, he, too, has always had an interest in what differentiates the real thing from the copy. What is particularly interesting about *Slow Man*, his first fully Australian novel, is that he feels obliged overtly to assert his interest in "fictional truths and truthful fictions" (Attridge 199). In a novel preoccupied with how Rayment's life becomes Elizabeth Costello's creation, and she, as his creator, his doppelganger, he if anything over-determines our reading by stamping the novel with the sign of the fake, in the near-homonymic Fauchery forgery incident. When Rayment allows Drako Jokiĉ to make free with his photograph collection, Drako

abuses his hospitality, though largely benignly, by making amusing photo-shopped copies of Paul's precious prints, and replacing the real thing with the fakes. Intriguingly, as the fakes replace the faces in the photos with family members's faces, the fakes come to bear the features of the surrounding reality.

The Tale of New Immigration. Post-Second World War immigration to Australia (as against nineteenth-century immigration), that development of which the Jokic family's move from Croatia via Germany to South Australia forms a small part, has for decades involved the country ever more deeply in networks of transnational connection and cross-ocean contact (Huggan 111, 113). From Brian Castro's *Birds of Passage* (1983), through Yasmine Gooneratne's *A Change of Skies* (1994), to Christos Tsiolkas's *Dead Europe* (2005), novels by Australian writers of immigrant background have repeatedly dealt in and critically reflected upon such connections. As far back as *Illywhacker* (1988), and vividly in recent work, Peter Carey, too, traces and retraces the pathways of travel, commerce and migration that connect Australia to Asia, in particular Malaya in *Fake*, and to the United States in *Theft*. Even within the more circumscribed geographical domain of Tim Winton's work, characters disappear from their native West Australia on surfing or sailing holidays to Indonesia. And Coetzee, himself a white immigrant to Australia, is visibly concerned in his post-2003 fiction with light, white, or less visible migration, most obviously so in *Slow Man*.

From the vantage point of Paul Rayment as narrative consciousness, *Slow Man* is a story about the white immigrant experience, about how a respect for long cultural traditions and European antiquity translates in a context where an awareness of history appears less deeply embedded. Their immigrant background is what he feels he has in common with Marijana Jokiĉ and her family, a feeling animated by the belief that this experience, though begun abroad (France in his case), can be grafted on to the Australian national imaginary, as one of its legitimate, tributary stories. The first serious conversation he has with Marijana, conducted while she is dusting his books, deals with Australia's "zero history" as seen from the new immigrant point of view, with the importance of "showing Australia has history too" (Coetzee, *Slow Man* 49). *Diary of a Bad Year* maintains this immigrant awareness in so far as JC refers several times to his former identity as a South African writer, and comments on Australia in his ansichten as a 'man outside' (to quote Carey quoting Max Harris of the Ern Malley affair (Carey, *My Life as a Fake* 268)). Diary, too, is in this respect a tale told by an immigrant or, more accurately, two immigrants. JC's young friend Anya, who supplies the underlying narrative strand, though she is comfortably at home in Australia, if not in her relationship with white Australian male Alan, identifies herself as "just the little Filipina" (Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello* 70).

The purpose of this Cook's tour of Australia's imaginative topography and its coverage by Coetzee, was to elaborate the earlier assertion that he approached the country with many of the definitive preoccupations of its *White Writing* readymade, as if carried in his own portable myth-kitty. Even if, given his settler writer background, some of these seemingly borrowed definitive stories were not consciously preemptive, they nonetheless have the appearance in his Australian fiction of the ready-

made, the as-if-by-design, as is self-reflexively underlined in *Slow Man's* made-to-measure Fauchery forgery. Indeed, the anticipatory quality of the country's definitive literary tropes in Coetzee is, this essay submits, crucial for an understanding of his revised post-2000 poetics, of how he came to an involved, though always still intellectualized engagement with Australia in his work. He was concerned to cite these conventions, I suggest, in order to declare his interest as a writer from outside in the generic matter of Australia, whether realist or not. And he did so in a way that bears only a limited resemblance to his evocation of generic Cape space, which is at once everywhere and nowhere in his South African fiction. Even if generic, his Australian topographical and cultural references are noticeably denotative and directed, if at the same time translated and self-reflexive.

Unlike in Coetzee's South African situation, where he maintained a legendary reticence about questions of national belonging, no Australian writer worthy of the name since the 1960s has deigned not to talk about Australia in their work, to take up positions vis-à-vis Australian history, culture or geography. To write Australia, to engage with its iconic stories and embellish its myths, to engage knowingly in its troubled past, is the mark of the Australian writer. This would apply even to those well-known literary exports of Australia, the works of Thomas Keneally and Clive James. The tug of the real is something that Tim Winton characteristically evokes, as in the earth humming with the impact of the sea in Breath, or in Pikelet's first-person narrative voice loaded with Australian vernacular (Winton, *Breath* 9). In Breath the boys Pikelet and Loonie spend their days as boy surfers in quest of the dangerous "flickering" moments riding giant waves that will both define and deform the rest of their lives (Winton, *Breath* 95). But the tug of the real is something that even postmodernist master Carey registers, as in *My Life as a Fake*.

In his Australian fiction, I suggest, Coetzee is concerned to reference the standard Australian representational conventions, the commonplace reality effects, in order to announce, first, that he subscribes as a writer of this place, as an adopted Australian writer. He seeks to do justice to Australia as it is most typically and elusively defined, as hard, sere reality, yet he also seeks to do so in ways that are deliberately knowing, and paradoxically distancing. Beginning to write Australia, first in *Elizabeth Costello*, then in *Slow Man* and *Diary of a Bad Year*, Coetzee laid out the basic "intellectual schemas" in order to register an allegiance, yet at the same time to move beyond it. Though these schemas conventionally signify aspects of reality in Australia, they also signal their own artifice. They point to the real, yet mask it at the same time, which is why they were useful to Coetzee theoretically and in terms of his poetics as he attempted to engage the Australian real. However it may be that the citation of the standard tropes ultimately worked not so much as a recognition preparatory to an underwriting of an Australia, but as a recognition that was at the same time an admission of defeat. No matter his mastery of the tropes, the writer signaled that the real here as in South Africa continued to defy him. So it is significant that Coetzee's 2009 *Summertime*, the final volume in his part-autobiographical trilogy *Scenes from Provincial Life*, returns to South Africa as setting. Australia in the novel has no significant place.

Although on one level Coetzee has appeared to embrace Australian reality effects in order to embrace Australia in his work, on another level his involvement is chiefly by way of a philosophical meditation on the real, as is evident from two key scenes, which I outline in closing. Coetzee evidently knows what makes Australian *White Writing*. Indeed, he knows it so well that he ostentatiously communicates his interest to his readers. The opening of *Slow Man* is unequivocal on the tug of the real, on cutting life to the quick: Coetzee begins, Paul Rayment begins, in medias res, with a seemingly intransitive action, a man flying through the air, the cause of the accident at this point non-specific. And the novel wishes from that moment of its opening to retrieve its impact, to relive its reality-effects, though throughout these must remain tantalizingly out of reach. From *Slow Man* to *Diary of a Bad Year* the trajectory is clear. Coetzee is involved in rounding up the various circus animals of the colonial dystopia, the haunt of dying white males, both in Australia, and beyond Australia. He exhibits these creatures, demonstrates that he understands them, but finally distances himself from them as being no more adequate to writing Australia than tropes from other settler traditions might be.

The first sign of this distancing comes in the form of the Dulgannon frogs episode in *Elizabeth Costello's* eighth lesson, where she presents to those at the portals to the next life a demonstration of what, ultimately, is meaningful to her. Speaking as a writer, she wants to prove to her judges not her beliefs, as she feels as a writer she lacks these, but the process of believing, the seeking of the meaningful (Attridge 201). Her illustration of the frogs that lie buried, as if dead, in the dry river-bed and revive in the wet season, she presents at the end of a series of meditations across the novel on questions of suffering, humanness, value, the writer's life. So it is offered as a final submission, more a last breath than a climax, not so much an afterthought as an after-belief—something that becomes particularly poignant when it is remembered, as Melinda Harvey has noted, that the Dulgannon River in the state of Victoria does not in fact exist (Harvey). The frogs story, Elizabeth is concerned to emphasize, is not an allegory. Rather, it is an illustration of existence, of life, and hence, I would venture to add, of reality; of that which continues, eluding and resisting language, of that which is "whether or nor I believe in them", as Elizabeth says, and whether or not the Dulgannon River exists also (Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello* 217, 219). What most fixes her mind about the frogs is not only their separateness, but how they appear to bear meaning, given their particular ability to revive after hibernation, to reaccept "returning life". "She thinks of the frog beneath the earth, spread out as if flying, as if parachuting through the darkness" (Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello* 219).

"Spread out as if flying"—it is an anticipation. The most eloquent sign of Coetzee's desire to acknowledge the Australian real is that *Slow Man*, his first fully Australian novel, opens with the hit of the real of Paul's accident. This pure event is my second closing scene. In the first paragraph, "he," the narrative consciousness, is rendered the object of 'the blow,' administered by—Wayne Blight, Magill Road, the physical world, a quantity of light? What has happened is something that has "befallen" him. In a later stream of thought: it is "[a]n accident, something that

befalls one," which brings only pain, "the real thing," and exposure (Coetzee, *Slow Man* 5, 4, 12). The accident becomes, as Costello says, a bringing to life for Paul, not as a flying creature but as "a lump of all too solid flesh" (Coetzee, *Slow Man* 159, 198). The blow, the light, the pain, and Magill Road, the hard Australian earth that is the medium of the dead-alive frogs—all these, severally and together, underwrite Paul's reality—a reality that inevitably lapses into language, into standard signifying practices, the very moment after he strikes the ground.

【Notes】

1. I use the term "international" republic of letters rather than Casanova's "world republic" to signal a distance from the concentric, metropole-centred model on which her work is predicated. See Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 2004.
2. See Derek Walcott, *What the Twilight Says: Essays*; Chris Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonialism*; Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*.
3. See Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought in the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*?
4. See Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*; *Living in a New Country*.
5. The historical and imaginative links between these southern colonial spaces were explored in Darian-Smith, Gunner and Nuttall (1993), in which Coetzee's formulations featured prominently. See also Christopher Miller's *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985)
6. On the novel's multiple metafictional turns, see Sue Kossew, "Border Crossings" (2009): 60 –7.
7. Reference is to the cultural historical and literary studies of, amongst others, Paul Carter, Andrew Hassan, Chris Healy, Graham Huggan, Kay Schaffer, and Richard White.

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To Speak of This You Would Need the Tongue of a God: Coetzee's *Age of Iron*, Township Violence, and the Classics

Derek Attridge

Abstract Coetzee's representation of township violence in *Age of Iron* is untypical of his work in depicting directly and vividly the horrors of life under apartheid, and the accuracy of his account can be verified by examining other documents referring to the events in Guguletu and neighbouring townships in 1986, when state-armed vigilantes destroyed the homes of supporters of the ANC. However, the literary dimension of his description is paramount, and the events are viewed through the perspective of Mrs Curren, who, as a former teacher of classics, cannot help interpreting her experience through the works she has read, and who urges her daughter not to trust her account. There are a number of echoes of Vergil, especially the episode of the Aeneid in which Aeneas visits the underworld. These echoes not only contribute to the presentation of a particular character, but associate the violence being observed to a history of violence and of literary representations of violence. As a work of literature, *Age of Iron* does not aim to have a direct political effect, but to offer readers an experience that may continue to haunt them and thus keep alive the memory of these terrible events.

Key words Coetzee; *Age of Iron*; classical allusions; township violence

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The elderly, ailing Mrs Curren, whose letter to her daughter we are reading in the fictional world of J. M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*, has offered to drive her maid Florence from central Cape Town to the Cape Flats in the early morning to help search for her son Bheki, who has gone missing. The pages that follow are some of the most memorable in the novel, and yet at the same time they seem untypical of it, and indeed of Coetzee's writing more generally: they attempt to convey the horror of the violence rending the townships and settlements in the traumatic year of 1986 with a directness that brings Coetzee closer to historical reportage than anywhere else in his fiction.

Mrs. Curren has been taken by Florence's cousin Mr. Thabane from the township of Guguletu to the edge of a nearby shantytown; the rain is beating against her face and she is shivering with cold. Her account, supposedly written once she is back home, continues as follows:

> The path widened, then came to an end in a wide, flat pond. On the far side of the pond the shanties started, the lowest-lying cluster surrounded by water, flooded. Some built sturdily of wood and iron, others no more than skins of plastic sheeting over frames of branches, they straggled north over the dunes as far as I could see.
>
> At the brink of the pond I hesitated. "Come," said Mr Thabane. Holding on to him I stepped in, and we waded across, in water up to our ankles. One of my shoes was sucked off. "Watch out for broken glass," he warned. I retrieved the shoe.
>
> Save for an old woman with a sagging mouth standing in a doorway, there was no one in sight. But as we walked further the noise we had heard, which at first might have been taken for wind and rain, began to break up into shouts, cries, calls, over a ground-bass which I can only call a sigh: a deep sigh, repeated over and over, as if the wide world itself were sighing.
>
> Then the little boy, our guide, was with us again, tugging Mr Thabane's sleeve, talking excitedly. The two of them broke away; I struggled behind them up the duneside. (Coetzee 87)

Mrs Curren finds herself behind a huge crowd looking down at what she calls a "scene of devastation": burning and smouldering shanties, emitting black smoke. She struggles to comprehend what she is witnessing:

> Jumbles of furniture, bedding, household objects stood in the pouring rain. Gangs of men were at work trying to rescue the contents of the burning shacks, going from one to another, putting out the fires; or so I thought till with a shock it came to me that these were no rescuers but incendiaries, that the battle I saw them waging was not with the flames but with the rain.
>
> It was from the people gathered on the rim of this amphitheatre in the dunes that the sighing came. Like mourners at a funeral they stood in the downpour, men, women and children, sodden, hardly bothering to protect themselves, watching the destruction. (87 – 8)

Mrs Curren observes a man attacking the door of a shack with an axe and another setting fire to it; when stones are thrown at these men, they advance on the people in the crowd, who turn and run. One of the crowd knocks Mrs Curren to the ground, and when she manages to get up again she expresses her sense of complete disorientation:

> A woman screamed, high and loud. How could I get away from this terrible

> place? Where was the pond I had waded across, where was the path to the car? There were ponds everywhere, pools, lakes, sheets of water; there were paths everywhere, but where did they lead? (89)

Mr Thabane finds her, and, before a ring of spectators, asks her what sort of crime it is that she sees. Eventually, in what David Attwell calls an "especially memorable moment," she gives the answer quoted in my title: "'To speak of this' — I waved a hand over the bush, the smoke, the filth littering the path — 'You would need the tongue of a god'" (91). A little later they find the rain—beaten body of Bheki, laid out with four other victims of shooting in the roofless remains of a building. In the distance Mrs Curren sees a line of khaki-brown troop-carriers.[1]

The historical accuracy of the scene described here is not difficult to substantiate. In May and June 1986 the homes of around 60,000 people were destroyed in Guguletu, Crossroads and the neighbouring settlements, with about 60 deaths in the fighting.[2] Florence tells Mrs Curren that "They were giving guns to the witdoeke and the witdoeke were shooting" — not in Guguletu itself, she explains, but "out in the bush" (83). There is considerable evidence, from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission testimony and elsewhere, that residents hostile to the activities of the pro-UDF and ANC youth were armed and supported by the police; their arm- or head-bands made of white cloth (witdoeke) were the notorious emblem of their affiliation. Although Florence says at first she thinks they will have to go to "Site C" — an area of the huge township of Khayelitsha some distance from Guguletu — Mrs Curren's description of the journey suggests that a more likely candidate, if we want to fix on a precise location, is the shantytown known as KTC. (I haven't come across any specific evidence for the flooding which plays a significant part in Mrs Curren's experience, though the settlements on the Cape Flats are notorious for their liability to floods so this is not an unlikely scenario for a winter morning.) The description of the journey from Guguletu appears to lack geographical precision — Mr Thabane drives through a "landscape of scorched earth" beyond the houses, then turns north, "away from the mountain, then off the highway onto a dirt road" that soon becomes sand (86). If Mr Thabane's house is near Lansdowne Road, along which Mrs Curren has driven and which borders Guguletu to the south, he would need to travel north to reach KTC. Another possibility for their destination is Crossroads, a little further away to the east. Site C is further away still, to the south-east, and I have not found any documentation of violence there in 1986 — in fact, there is evidence that it was a centre for the witdoeke:

> During the months of March to June 1986 a bloody and devastating territorial war was fought between Ngxobongwana's groups and the satellite camps. Ngxobongwana was in Ciskei at the time of the violence. The Wit Doeke from Crossroads were supported by Mali Hoza and his community in Site C of Khayelitsha. Many eye witnesses claimed that the Wit Doeke were also supported by the police and the army. It was claimed that there was identity of interest between Ngxobongwana, who wished to have the area cleared for his own people, and the State,

> which wished to crush the "comrades" and pave the way for the establishment of a town council and an "orderly settlement". Many lives were lost, shacks were destroyed and almost 65% of the area of KTC way [sic] razed to the ground.[3]

Although it's probably not possible to identify exactly a place and a time to which the fictional events correspond, there is sufficient historical accuracy in Coetzee's account for this section of the novel to work as effective reportage. One could say that this accuracy is a necessary condition for the success of these pages of *Age of Iron* — had Coetzee significantly distorted the historical record he could have been accused of irresponsibility and lost the reader's confidence — but not a sufficient one: it is quite possible to be accurate and yet fail in the task of responsible representation. What, I want to ask in this essay, is specific to literary representations of traumatic experiences such as the township violence of 1986? To pursue this question further, we need to examine the way the novel raises the question of representation itself — something implicit in Mrs Curren's expression of helplessness in the face of the task of description, a helplessness which seems to be more fundamental than that of the liberal white individual faced by the extreme suffering of the non-white poor, although that is of course an aspect of her situation that cannot be ignored[4] — It's an aspect that Coetzee gives full expression to in the retort by "a man in the crowd": "This woman talks shit" (91).

After a dozen pages giving an account of the violence and its aftermath as witnessed by Mrs Curren, written in a fairly conventional novelistic mode with vivid description and plenty of dialogue, we are suddenly reminded that we are, supposedly, reading a letter meant not for us, but for another fictional personage. Mrs Curren breaks off her account of her experiences in the squatter camp and township, and addresses her daughter directly:

> I tell you the story of this morning mindful that the storyteller, from her office, claims the place of right. It is through my eyes that you see; the voice that speaks in your head is mine. Through me alone do you find yourself here on these desolate flats, smell the smoke in the air, see the bodies of the dead, hear the weeping, shiver in the rain. (95)

The reader of the novel may not be the addressee of the letter, but it is hard not to take this passage as having him or her directly in its sights. At first it may sound like a version of the classic statement of the realistic novelist's purpose; as Conrad famously put it in the preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, "My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel — it is, before all, to make you see. That — and no more, and it is everything" (Conrad xiv). But Mrs Curren is not, in fact, making a realist writer's assertion at all: the emphasis here is on the story-teller, not the story — the key phrases are "through my eyes ... through me alone". And because the story is not, cannot be, an objective representation — least of all, of such scenes as these — the responsible reader is obliged to mistrust the story-teller at every point. Mrs Curren — and we

might say Coetzee — expresses this powerfully in the next paragraph:

> I am the one writing: I, I. So I ask you: attend to the writing, not to me. If lies and pleas and excuses weave among the words, listen for them. Do not pass them over, do not forgive them easily. Read all, even this adjuration, with a cold eye. (95 – 96)

Even the warning that in her writing she may be being less than completely honest may itself be less than completely honest — we only have to turn to Coetzee's essay "Confession and Double Thoughts" to find a compelling account of the impossibility of a true confession in a secular context, since it is necessary to confess that one's confession is not as full and pure as it might be, and so on *ad infinitum*.

We are thus not allowed to forget that *Age of Iron*'s pages on township violence are the representation, firstly, of a (fictional) middle-class white woman who has benefited from an extensive education and, secondly, of a (real) middle-class white man who has similarly benefited. This does not, of course, render the representation invalid, but it does encourage us to examine it for its limitations and biases. Mrs Curren is a retired classics teacher, and in attempting to describe what she has just witnessed, she cannot but fall back on literary passages that have become part of the texture of her thinking. If we examine these echoes, we will find that they signal a very particular consciousness, with its own way of seeing.

As they approach Guguletu, the mist swirling around the car prompts a memory of Book VI of Virgil's *Aeneid*: "Wraiths, spirits. Aornos this place: birdless" (83). This is a recollection of Aeneas's arrival at the cave leading to the underworld:

> There was a deep rugged cave, stupendous and yawning wide, protected by a lake of black water and the glooming forest. Over this lake no birds could wing a straight course without harm, so poisonous the breath which streamed up from those black jaws and rose to the vault of sky; and that is why the Greeks named this place "Aornos, the Birdless."[5]

And when their ten-year old guide to the shantytown arrives, Mrs Curren thinks back to the innocence of her own childhood, prompting another memory of a passage from the *Aeneid*, this one describing the weeping of the infant souls at the entrance to the underworld:

> White as grubs in our swaddling bands, we will be dispatched to join those infant souls whose eternal whining Aeneas mistook for weeping. White our colour, the colour of limbo: white sands, white rocks, a white light pouring down from all sides... *In limine primo*: on the threshold of death, the threshold of life. (85)

Aeneas has crossed the river Styx and escaped the three-headed Cerberus when he

hears cries.

> These were the loud wailing of infant souls weeping at the very entrance-way; never had they had their share of life's sweetness, for the dark day had stolen them from their mother's breasts and plunged them to a death before their time. (160)

In the passages describing the encounter with the burning shantytown, there are no classical allusions as specific as these examples, but there is throughout a sense that the particularities of what Mrs Curren is witnessing are being understood through their relation to a long history of literary representations of the experience of horror and suffering. The wading across the pond is a factual matter, yet with the *Aeneid*'s depiction of the underworld already alluded to it's hard not to hear echoes of Aeneas's crossing of the River Styx into that place of otherness, of misery, of deathliness, "They crossed the river; and Charon eventually disembarked both the priestess and the hero, unharmed, on ugly slime amid grey reeds" (159). The extraordinary sighing that Mrs Curren hears — "a deep sigh, repeated over and over, as if the wide world itself were sighing" — is more than a realistic detail, indeed, it may not strike the reader as particularly realistic, but draws some of its remarkable power from its suggestion of the myriad souls encountered by Aeneas in the underworld, such as those grieving in the "Fields of Mourning," which "stretch in every direction" like the shanties straggling over the dunes as far as Mrs Curren can see (160). When she is able to identify the source of the sighing as the shack dwellers gathered on the edge of the amphitheatre — itself a surprisingly classical word in this context — she compares them to "mourners at a funeral" (88). Later she will think "Hades, Hell: the domain of ideas. [...] Why can hell not be at the foot of Africa, and why can the creatures of hell not walk among the living?" (101)[6]

The other literary presence in this scene is Dante's *Inferno*, itself full of allusions to the journey to the underworld described by Virgil in the *Aeneid*, with Virgil himself, of course, acting as guide to the nether regions.[7] To emphasise the way in which Mrs Curren sees these scenes of horror and misery through the lens of her classical and post-classical reading is not to find fault with her, or with Coetzee; it is to highlight the fact that to witness an event of this kind is inevitably to struggle to interpret it, as Mrs Curren struggles to interpret the action of the men doing something to the shacks, and to draw on whatever frames of reference one has available. It is also a reflection of Coetzee's own perspective, an acknowledgement that he cannot speak for those more intimately involved in the violence he represents. In these pages of *Age of Iron*, Coetzee manages both to convey a traumatic experience by literary means — there is undeniable power in the classically-inflected account written after the event by Coetzee's fictional character — and to reveal the impossibility of truly conveying it by these means.

If Coetzee's novel, because of its circulation around the world, spurred some readers into action as a result of their being made aware of the evils perpetrated dur-

ing the 1986 Emergency, it did so as an extra, a by-product of its literary value, as it were, and not as a consequence of its importance of its working as literature. But if in linking the traumatic experience of an elderly woman in the burning settlements of South Africa in 1986 to one of western culture's profoundest imaginings of the place of the dead — and Virgil is of course echoing Homer, and will be echoed by Dante and a hundred other writers, painters, composers, and film-makers — the novel succeeds in taking readers through their own psychic and emotional underworld journeys, so that they continue to be haunted by the scene of the flat pond, the repeated sigh, the gangs of men at their terrible work, it will have succeeded as literature. And this is not, as I've been arguing, because it universalises the particular historical moment, but because that historical moment in its particularity gains cognitive and affective force from millennia-old cultural narratives that register the trauma of exposure to an underworld, or other world, of suffering and death.

【Notes】

1. In focusing on these pages of *Age of Iron*, I am omitting all reference to the mysterious vagrant Vercueil, who plays such an important part in the novel from its first page to its last (an importance I have discussed in *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*). The shift in tonality which his absence from the Guguletu episode creates is such that one feels one is reading a different novel. For an important discussion of the way in which the presence of Vercueil troubles the boundaries of the serious and the nonserious, see Patrick Hayes 144 – 64.

2. See the South African Press Association Report. Beinart also gives the figure of 60,000 rendered homeless. See Beinart 266. See also Davenport and Saunders 467 – 8.

3. See Goldstone Commission : Report on Violence at Crossroads.

4. See Kossew 195 and Hayes 149. Rich sees Mrs Curren's inability to speak as an indication of the failure of "liberal discourse" which, "in a situation of acute crisis and polarization, is stretched to the point of silence"; while Kossew states that "the language of the colonizers with its eurocentric classical allusions is shown to be inadequate and evasive". These comments are undoubtedly true, but the scene also raises more general questions about language's capacity in the face of trauma. Hayes sees her inarticulacy as the result of a clash of genres, emphasising "the way she is confronted by the divergent forms of sociability asserted by the countergenre that is unfolding around her"; in doing so, he unconsciously duplicates Mrs Curren's own tendency to interpret her experience in literary terms.

5. See Virgil 154. See also Laura Wright 68 – 72.

6. The crossing of the Styx in Book VI of the *Aeneid* is still in Mrs Curren's mind as she approaches death: she quotes four lines to Vercueil on the host of unburied souls clamouring to cross, though she gives him a jokily false translation. See *Age of Iron* J. M. Coetzee 176.

7. For a discussion of these allusions, see Hoegberg 31. Hoegberg's assertion that the act of leaving Florence's daughter Hope behind is "a clear reference to the sign on the gate of Dante's Hell" ("Abandon all hope ye who enter here") seems a little far-fetched, however. But then again, Mrs Curren does comment that being accompanied by children called Hope and Beauty is "like living in an allegory"... Hayes argues that the name "Vercueil" in some pronunciations sounds like "Virgil", and that Mrs Curren wants to cast him in this role, though he rejects, refusing to "escort her to the 'underworld' of Guguletu" with a curt "Fuck off". For Hayes, "this particular trip to the underworld... owes rather more to Cervantes than to Dante". See also Hayes 144, 149. And for the quotation from *Age of Iron*, see Coetzee 84, 82.

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Writing Self as Other: J. M. Coetzee's "life writing" in *Scenes from Provincial Life*[1]

Sue Kossew

Abstract J. M. Coetzee's trilogy of fictionalized memoirs, or "Scenes from Provincial Life" as he has subtitled them, provides readers with a quirky and peculiarly Coetzee-like perspective on the genre of autobiography. This paper will situate this new work within both Coetzee's own elusive "life writing" (in the form of the previous two volumes) and the wider literary genre of memoir. What does it mean, for example, to look back from both a geographical and historical distance to a time when a now-famous and much-awarded literary figure was at the beginning of his literary career? And if, as Coetzee has suggested, this is the "third and last instalment" of his South African years, what insights (if any) does it afford us into his current thinking? Literary techniques such as the blurring of narrative boundaries between the biographical and autobiographical subject and the "betrayal" of self and others that is always part of writing a memoir draw attention, as other "late works" by Coetzee have done, to further exploration of the question of "who speaks" in any literary work. This teasing textual instability and the crossing of narrative borders and genres have increasingly become features of Coetzee's later works.
Key words Coetzee; writing self; Other; life writing; fictionalized memoirs

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J. M. Coetzee's trilogy of fictionalized memoirs, or "Scenes from Provincial Life" as he has subtitled them, provides readers with a quirky and peculiarly Coetzee-like perspective on the genre of autobiography. While *Boyhood* (1997) was published with the subtitle, "Scenes from Provincial Life," *Youth* (2002) did not have this subtitle at the time of publication, although it was clearly the next stage in the series of auto-

biographical texts by Coetzee.[2] Most recently, the dust jacket notes of *Summertime* suggest that it "completes the majestic trilogy of fictionalized memoir begun with *Boyhood* and *Youth*" and Coetzee has referred to it as the "third installment" of "Scenes from Provincial Life." While some reviewers were confused as to the genre of *Youth* in particular, it is clear that these three texts form a continuum of Coetzee's life-writing or, as David Attwell puts it, a "life-of-writing" ("Estrangements" 237). This most recent text, *Summertime*, is narrated by a "biographer" supposedly after Coetzee's death. Covering the years 1972 – 77 of the writer's life, and comprising interviews with people who apparently knew the writer, this third volume is even more distanced from the subject of the memoirs than were the previous two, narrated as they were in the third person. Literary techniques such as the blurring of narrative boundaries between the biographical and autobiographical subject and the "betrayal" of self and others that inevitably form part of writing a memoir draw attention in this text, as other texts by Coetzee have done, to further exploration of the question of "who speaks" in any literary work. This teasing textual instability and the crossing of narrative borders and genres have increasingly become features of Coetzee's later works.

This paper will consider *Summertime* both within Coetzee's own elusive "life writing" (alongside the previous two "memoirs") and in the context of his own critical writing on autobiography. In particular, it will suggest that Coetzee's writing of the self as other obsessively draws attention to the generic conventions of writing a life and to the ethical implications of such writing. In doing so, it exposes the impossibility of representing "truth" in any genre, whether history, fiction or life-writing.

Throughout his fictional oeuvre, and in his commentaries on writing, Coetzee has scrupulously insisted on the constructed discursive nature of both fiction and history, or what is usually delineated as either imaginative or factual writing. He has drawn attention to the notion that "everything you write, including criticism and fiction, writes you as you write it" ("Interview" 17). In addition, he has suggested in an interview with David Attwell that "all autobiography is story-telling, all writing is autobiography" (Doubling 391). At the heart of his concern with discourses of self is the notion of "truth." Indeed, his inaugural Professorial lecture at the University of Cape Town in 1984 was entitled "Truth in Autobiography," signaling the longstanding and ongoing importance of this issue to Coetzee. In this lecture, he considers Rousseau's autobiographical text *Confessions* in terms of what he terms "the cost of telling the truth" (4). He identifies Rousseau's own autobiographical mode as that of making the truth rather than finding and telling the truth; not just representing the past but also representing the "present in which you wrestle to explain to yourself what it was that really happened that day" (4). The resulting account "may be full of gaps and evasion" but at least represents the mind trying to understand itself. In a post-Dostoevskyian world, however, even such self-questioning "merely lands one in an endless regression" (4). It is clear that this lecture contains the seeds of the argument Coetzee presents in more detailed form in his seminal essay, "Confession and Double Thoughts."[3]

If all writing is a form of writing the self, it may be assumed that there is a certain truth-value in all writing. Yet Coetzee distinguishes between the "personal narra-

tive" of autobiography and narrative fiction by the intentionality of truth-telling on the part of the writer as well as by the readers' assumptions of "certain standards of truthfulness" when reading an autobiography. Thus he suggests that autobiography has the intention to be "a kind of history rather than a kind of fiction."[4] However, he points out that any "verifiability" to which autobiographical narratives may be subject is limited as only their author is able to vouch for their reliability. He continues, in the same piece:

> For that reason, the element of trust on the part of the reader has to be strong: there has to be a tacit understanding, a pact, between autobiographer and reader that the truth is being told.
>
> Such a pact is, I would guess, rarely observed to the full…There may be actions or thoughts which he [the writer] feels it is simply too shameful to make public, or which he feels could destroy the reader's good opinion of him…There may be things he simply does not understand about himself, or has forgotten, or suppressed. (12)

Citing Freud's paper entitled "Therapy Terminable and Interminable," Coetzee suggests that autobiography is "bound up with soul-searching and the confession of sins." As such, its ultimate reader is God from whom there can be no secrets. Thus, he suggests, following Freud, any story about the self will have within it a mixture of "historical" and "poetic" truth, resulting in a "fiction of the truth" (12). This seemingly paradoxical notion informs the narrational strategies of all three of his fictionalized autobiographies in a process that Frank Kermode, in his recent review of *Summertime*, has labeled "fictioneering" (the term "fictioneer" is used by Coetzee's fictional biographer in *Summertime*).[5]

Most obviously, it is the use of the third person and the present tense in the first two volumes of Coetzee's "memoirs" that engaged the attention of reviewers, critics and readers. For example, in a review entitled "Third Person Singular", William Deresiewicz in the *New York Times* calls the deployment of a third-person narrative perspective and of the present tense "bizarre choices" for a writer of a life, signaling that Coetzee has "turned his back on the entire autobiographical tradition" (6). As Margaret Lenta points out, though, this is clearly not the case, as numerous other memoirs have been written both in the third person and in the present tense.[6] For Lenta, Coetzee's use of the third person, which converts autobiography to autrebiography, has a number of writerly and readerly effects including "the apparent separation of narrator from embryo artist, the love-hate relationship of narrator and reader with protagonist, [and] the remoteness in time" (168). She continues:

> Free indirect discourse, borrowing for the most part from the thought habits and vocabulary of the protagonist, but capable of moving into those of his associates or of a narrator, is the effective substitute for what in a more conventional account would be the first person. (168)

It is particularly appropriate, Lenta argues, that this artist-figure (most particularly figured in *Youth*) who is self-absorbed, lonely, proud and uncompromising, should be constructed through the narration as separate, distant and different from the author/narrator. This is narrating the self as other, or autrebiography, a term Coetzee himself introduces in an interview with David Attwell (Doubling 394). This perspective of otherness, however, does not just produce a distancing effect: as Dirk Klopper points out, these narrative devices of third-person and present-tense narration construct a "contradictory simultaneity of intimacy and distance, directness of observation and emotional detachment, access to the textured impressions of consciousness and its ironic displacement" (24).[7]

For both Lenta and Hermione Lee, it is James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* that provides a close comparison with these two Coetzee memoirs. Lee suggests that Coetzee is "even harsher towards his younger self than Joyce is to Stephen's high aspirations" and that *Youth* is "the ultimate alienated and alienating autobiography; not an inward exploration, or an ethical indictment of the author/subject, but a self-parody" (15). The self-deceptiveness of any seemingly truth-telling act exposed and addressed in these two volumes returns one to the issue of "double thoughts" in the confessional mode. For, as Coetzee points out in his essay on confession, "the only sure truth in autobiography is that one's self-interest will be located at one's blind spot" (Doubling 392). Thus, for Coetzee, it is likely that "getting to the core of yourself may not be feasible, that perhaps the best you can hope for will not be the history of yourself but a story about yourself, a story that will not be the truth but may have some truth-value" ("Fictions" 12). By using narrative strategies that draw attention to the constructed nature of writing a life, then, and to the impossibility of "sincerity" or "authenticity" (words he uses in relation to Rousseau's *Confessions*), Coetzee mobilizes a self-referential autobiographical mode that holds out the promise of intimacy and revelation, and occasionally approaches it, while simultaneously keeping the self at arm's length.

Thematically, the notion of being a provincial ("Scenes from Provincial Life") is inevitably linked to Coetzee's apartheid-era South African identity. This sub-title itself could ambiguously echo William Cooper's little-known 1950s autobiographical trilogy (*Scenes from Provincial Life*, *Scenes from Metropolitan Life*, and *Scenes from Married Life*, and its sequels, *Scenes from Later Life* and *Scenes from Death and Life*) or Honoré de Balzac's *Scenes from Provincial Life*, one section of his *Comédie Humaine*. Clearly there is some reference, too, to Tolstoy's fictionalized autobiographical trilogy, *Childhood* (1852), *Boyhood* (1854) and *Youth* (1856).[8] The provincialism of *Boyhood* lies both in the physical isolation of its setting in a new housing estate in the town of Worcester ("between the railway line and the National Road" 1) and in its protagonist's uncertain identity: as neither English nor Afrikaner South African, as of the farm but not on the farm, as an outsider shut out of the comfort of belonging to a designated group in his own motherland. In *Youth* it is the painful and shameful nature of his South Africanness ("like an albatross around his neck" 101) as well as his apparent sexual ineptitude that mark him as a provincial: a colonial "other" in "swinging" London of the 1960s. *Summertime* presents the shame of his enforced re-

turn to the provincialism of South Africa having failed to secure a green card in the United States, a return from the relative freedom of living "overseas" to a place of restriction from which he has grown apart and a return to living with his father in unwanted domestic intimacy.

If, for Coetzee, "double thoughts" and self-interest are inevitably linked to the confessional mode as explicated in the "Confession and Double Thoughts" essay, betrayal of the self and others is an inevitable aspect of autobiography as, indeed, of all writing. As one critic has pointed out, Coetzee's "cynical ethics of the self" produces a "self in Coetzee's fiction [that] is irredeemably self-interested, fails to transcend itself to engage with the other as other and, in effect, is caught in an interpersonal aporia between self and other" (Yeoh 345). There are many examples of how this sense of betrayal is played out in Coetzee's life-writing trilogy, both in his representation of interpersonal relationships and in the very practice of writing the self and others.

Boyhood begins with betrayal. The ten-year-old narrator tells of his mother's desire to escape the confines of their house on a newly-built bleak housing estate outside the town of Worcester — a "restlessness" he shares with her — by buying a bicycle. Her initially fruitless attempts to ride the heavy bicycle are met with ridicule by the narrator's father: "Women do not ride bicycles, he says" (*Boyhood* 3). Replicating the child's logic, the narrator tells of how he "begins to waver" in his support of his mother's cycling as she struggles to learn to ride, asking "What if his father is right?... perhaps women are indeed not supposed to ride bicycles" (3). From that point, it is only a matter of a paragraph until "His heart turns against her. That evening he joins in with his father's jeering. He is well aware what a betrayal this is. Now his mother is all alone" (3). The childish notion of his taking sides, ganging up with the men against the woman to keep her in her place, is counterbalanced by a sophisticated awareness of the way this behavior has "defeated" her and that he "must bear part of the blame." The betrayal of his mother continues with his keeping his life at school "a tight secret" from her, despite his awareness of her strong need to protect him. Similarly, his rages against his mother and the "torrents of scorn he pours upon her", conduct that is kept "a careful secret from the outside world" (13), form part of a self-acknowledged pattern of abusive behavior. By conceding that this turning-away from his mother reinforces that he "belongs with the men," he is showing a consciousness of gender roles and their Freudian implications well beyond his years. The revelation of this previously closely-guarded secret of his "shameful" behavior to the reader comes close to the confessional mode that Coetzee has identified as an inevitable element in autobiography.

Similarly, he shows an awareness of the painful nature of his strong emotional attachment to his father's family's farm. While "confessing" through his life-writing his fierce love for the farm, he is also aware of it as a source of contention in the tug-of-war between his parents and thus of the need to keep it secret. Thus, "he cannot talk about his love [for the farm]···because confessing to it would be a betrayal of his mother···not only because she too comes from a farm, a rival farm···but because she is not truly welcome on this farm" (80). The idea that places themselves can lie at

the heart of both belonging and contestation is played out in the text both in the context of his parents' rival family backgrounds, as in this quotation, and also in the context of apartheid South Africa, where "his people" are "uneasy guest[s]" (79). His instinctive awareness that "one day the farm will be wholly gone, wholly lost" and that he is already "grieving at that loss" (80) signals a distinctly unchildlike perspective. Thus, the theme of betrayal is linked not just to his fluctuating loyalties to his parents ("He is her son, not his father's son" 79) but to the wider issue of disputed national belonging. It is also, inevitably, located on the site of the body. The narrator, undergoing the changes to his body that signal adolescence, "feels like a crab pulled out of its shell, pink and wounded and obscene" (151). Betrayed by his own body, the writing self, the thirteen-year-old boy of Boyhood's ending, turns to the life of the mind, taking on responsibility for being the only one to "do the thinking" (166). It is he who has to keep in his head "all the books, all the people, all the stories" for, if he does not remember them, "who will?" (166). The duality of this heavy writerly responsibility coupled with the awareness of the inevitability of betrayal through writing ends this first installment of the life-of-writing and points the way to the second installment.

Indeed, betrayal of women and the sense of his leading a "double life" in which he has to bear the "burden of imposture" (13) that often takes the form of an excruciating self-consciousness extends from *Boyhood* into *Youth*. It is the genre of the memoir that enables the double life to be exposed, the secrets and silences of his troubled family life evoked so painfully in *Boyhood* relentlessly returned to in *Youth*. The betrayals in *Youth* are twofold and linked: the floundering of his quest for poetic creativity and the failure of his sexual encounters. John, the "he" of the text, is sure that he is destined to be a writer but is instead working for IBM, desperately trying to "burn with the sacred fire of art" (*Youth* 66) while living out a mundane and unfulfilling daily life and keeping secret his desire to become a poet. If, as "everyone says," "sex and creativity go together," and if women instinctively locate "the fire that burns in the artist" (66), he believes that it is through sex that he may be able to access this creative spark. However, he is unable to attract attention from any English girls on the train, despite his ostentatious flourishing of various books of poetry (72), attributing this to their awareness of his "colonial gaucherie" (71). The sexual, and indeed social, encounters he does have are marked by a coldness in his own responses, a lack of reciprocity that he attributes to his own "meanness" and "poverty of spirit," what amounts in his estimation to a "moral sickness" (95). Yet, amusingly and ironically, in tendering his notice at IBM, he cites lack of friendships as one of the reasons for his resignation.

His inability to escape his provincial South Africanness (his first prose story is, for him, disappointingly set in South Africa, a "handicap" that he would prefer to leave behind (62)), is a failure of his programmatic plan of "turning himself into a different person that began when he was fifteen" (98) and that will not end, he asserts, until "all memory of the family and the country he left behind is extinguished" (98). Yet he is still a foreigner in London: "Not in a month of Sundays would Londoners take him for the real thing" (102). His romantic notion of being "remade" in

London and of getting rid of his "old self" to reveal a "new, true, passionate self" (111) is, of course, itself couched in the language of fiction, revealing through ironic distancing the naiveté of the narrator. By the end, though, he believes he is "on his way to becoming a proper Londoner" (113) by becoming emotionally hardened as a result of his ongoing misery. But he also experiences a rare moment of positive and even transcendent belonging, transformed by a moment of "ecstatic unity" with the green earth on Hampstead Heath (117). Even this, however, is couched in Lawrentian language that signals the bad faith of self-conscious romanticism. The stain of his identity, like the stain of Marianne's blood on his mattress, can be hidden for a while but not for long.

His own reflections on his writing self and his fear of the "confrontation with the blank page" (166) that stands for the failure of his poetic ambitions are confronted in his contradictory attempts to come to terms with the shame of his "caddish behaviour" (130) towards Marianne. While admitting to himself his dishonourable behavior, he is both seeking to punish himself and to fit the episode "into the story of his life that he tells himself" (130). He can only hope that the story "will not get out" (130) but is humiliated by his cousin's letter that accuses him of behaving badly. He recognizes the bad faith of his excuse that an "artist must taste all experience, from the noblest to the most degraded" (164) in order to justify himself, as well as the sophistry of the paradox that the poet needs to tell self-justificatory lies in order to experience "moral squalor." In this self-recognition of an impasse that is at once personal and writerly, the text draws towards an ending with the 24-year-old John still awaiting a visit from destiny: "he would rather be bad than boring, has no respect for a person who would rather be bad than boring, and no respect either for the cleverness of being able to put his dilemma neatly into words" (165). This paradox is one that "goes to the heart of all his writing" (9) and that he expresses earlier in the text in relation to his diary. Having deliberately left his diary lying around so that Jacqueline could read about how he feels she is intruding on him, he wonders whether he should record in his diary all his emotions, even the ignoble ones, or keep them "shrouded." He continues:

> Besides, who is to say that the feelings he writes in his diary are his true feelings? Who is to say that at each moment while the pen moves he is truly himself? At one moment he may be truly himself, at another he might simply be making things up. How can he know for sure? (10)

The double bind of "truth in autobiography" is brilliantly encapsulated in these paradoxes of the writing self.

The notion of self-punishment through confession is evoked in both *Youth* and in *Summertime* by the repetition of the phrase "Agenbyte of inwit" (Youth 130 and *Summertime* 4). Meaning literally a prick of conscience, it is also the title of a confessional prose work written in Middle English and referred to by James Joyce in *Ulysses*. In *Youth*, it is referred to in the context of the narrator's suggestion that he "will gnaw away at himself" as penance for his "caddish" behaviour (130) and Coetzee

takes up the question of bad faith and conscience again in the first pages of *Summertime in the context of South African border killings recorded in the notebook entry of* 22 August 1972 that opens the text: "How to escape the filth: not a new question. An old rat-question that will not let go, that leaves its nasty, suppurating wound. Agenbite of inwit" (4). In this entry, it becomes clear that the writer has come back to South Africa (also referred to in *Youth* as a "wound") after living abroad, to be again under the "dirty thumb" of the ruling Nationalist Party government (6).

The eight notebook entries that make up the first section of the text cover the dates from August 1972 to June 1975 and appear in the text with additional italicized writer's comments that were, we are told by the biographer, known only as Mr Vincent who has purportedly put together this book, written by Coetzee as "memos to himself, written in 1999 or 2000 when he was thinking of adapting those particular entries for a book" (20). The self-judgmental nature of these comments (for example: "To be expanded on: his readiness to throw himself into half-baked projects; the alacrity with which he retreats from creative work into mindless industry" 8) recall the idea of his using writing to punish himself for his perceived misdeeds that we encountered in *Youth*. They also set the tone for the increasingly distanced and self-critical portrait of the artist that will emerge in this text. The next six sections of the text bear the names of the people being interviewed by Mr Vincent about the person, J. M. Coetzee, under whose name, of course, the text appears, and the final seventh section is titled "Notebooks: undated fragments." Thus, while the opening and closing sections of the text, the Notebooks, are written in the by-now familiar third-person present-tense narration of the previous two volumes of the "memoirs," the remaining material is presented in interview form, with questions from Mr Vincent and answers from those who have known the by-now famous but dead author, J. M. Coetzee. These interviewees include five women and one man, and the interviews are conducted in Canada, South Africa, Brazil, London and Paris, in the chronological order in which the interviewees entered Coetzee's life and sometimes with a hinted association with particular works of fiction. That Mr Vincent has never met "Coetzee" means that what his interviewees tell him is unverifiable. Thus, the truth-value of autobiography is doubly displaced in the major part of this text: firstly, onto Mr Vincent, the biographer, who is supposedly transcribing but also editing the interviews and, secondly, onto the interviewees whose own memories make up the text. The literalness of this "making up the text" is evident when Dr Julia Frankl warns the biographer (and reader) of the truth-status of her recollections:

> So let me be candid: as far as the dialogue is concerned, I am making it up as I go along. Which I presume is permitted, since we are talking about a writer. What I am telling you may not be true to the letter, but it is true to the spirit, be assured of that. (32)

At the same time, Julia warns Mr Vincent not to try to manipulate her story in which, contrary to what she believes to be his expectations, she is the main character and John the minor one (reminiscent of Susan Barton in *Foe* who is trying to keep control

of her own story): "if you go away from here and start fiddling with the text, the whole thing will turn to ash in your hands" (44). And her final words to him are that she is "just telling the truth. Without the truth, no matter how hard, there can be no healing" (84). She refuses to answer Mr Vincent's final brief question and the reader never finds out what that question might have been. The inclusion of the request for another question and its refusal, along with the place and date of the interview, adds a level of believability to the text, emphasizing the "reality effect" that pretends to be using unedited, unmediated material.

In contrast, the editor admits to his next interviewee, Margot Jonker, Coetzee's cousin, that he has indeed fiddled with the interview material collected in a first interview with her a year previously. His editing of the interview includes his having cut out his questions, having "fixed up the prose to read as an uninterrupted narrative spoken in your voice" and having "dramatized it here and there, letting people speak in their own voices" (87). Additionally, he has used the third-person and present-tense narration of Coetzee's other memoirs, explaining that "the she I use is like I but is not I" (89), a convention that Margot finds confusing. It is, of course, appropriate that many of the memories are of the family farm, Voëlfontein, so poignantly described in *Boyhood* and of Coetzee's early and later association with it.[9] Despite Mr Vincent's assurances that he will change anything she doesn't like, and that Margot's sister is unlikely to read "an obscure book put out by an academic press in England" (91) so will not object to the description of her as "hardhearted," as he reads Margot his "recast" narrative version of her first interview, she interrupts with objections, suggesting that his version doesn't sound like "what I told you" (91). By the end of the narration, she is adamant that it cannot stand as it is: "I want to go over it again, as you promised" (152). That the narrative does indeed appear to "stand as it is" in the version we read suggests either that she did in the end agree to the changes or that the editor betrayed her trust by not making them.

While the interview in the section entitled "Adriana" and conducted in Brazil maintains its conventional transcribed form, the interviewee suggests that her ability to "change the record" of the interview is extremely limited. This is because she is aware of her status as "one of Coetzee's women," a label that she is doomed to wear because of his infatuation with her, which was, she confirms, totally unreciprocated. Mr Vincent suggests that she was the original for Susan Barton in *Foe*, a Brazilian woman in the first draft – attractive, resourceful and with "a will of steel" (200). In this way, the reader is offered yet another version of how writers betray their subjects: by turning them into fictional characters.

It is in the interview with Martin, a fellow academic at the University of Cape Town and rival for an academic position for which John has applied, that the biographer is called on to account for the methodology of his biography. While Martin is ultimately not particularly forthcoming about details of John's personal life (it is the shortest interview in the book and he parries the biographer's question about John's personal relations by replying: "You are the biographer. If you find that train of thought worth following up, follow it" 211), he does comment on their shared sense of discomfort at living in apartheid South Africa, their shared academic interests and

on John's "strain of secretiveness." It is predominantly the interviewee, though, who here asks questions of the interviewer, questioning Mr Vincent's desire to hear "stories" about his subject, his choice of interviewees and his decision to interview those with an emotional investment in their relationship with him. Thus, Martin queries whether, in choosing only five sources for his work, the biographer is "inevitably going to come out with an account that is slanted towards the personal and the intimate at the expense of the man's actual achievements as a writer" (218). The biographer's responses include his belief that a biography has to "strike a balance between narrative and opinion" (216) and that he is "not interested in coming to a final judgment on Coetzee" which he leaves to history. He continues: "*What I am doing is telling the story of a stage in his life, or if we can't have a single story then several stories from several perspectives*" (217, italics in original). The silence with which the biographer meets some of Martin's comments about his biographical method signals a subtle shift in power. The biographer himself is being asked to justify his approach.

In the final interview, that with Sophie Denoël, a former colleague and lover of John Coetzee's, the ethics of writing a life and the connections between a writer's private life and his work are brought even more strongly to the fore. In challenging the biographer about his "authorization" to write a book on Coetzee, Sophie elicits a response from him that goes to the heart of the text's instability. Mr Vincent admits that his efforts to speak to people in South Africa who had known Coetzee were largely unsuccessful (some who had claimed to know him had mistaken him for another Coetzee). When Sophie asks why he does not rely more on the diaries, letters and notebooks, the usual raw material for biography, he cites their unreliability: they "*cannot be trusted…as a factual record…because he was a fictioneer…making up a fiction of himself*" (225, italics in original). He himself would rather hear "the truth…from people who knew him directly in the flesh" which will provide a range of "independent perspectives" than rely on the writer's own "*self-projection comprised by his oeuvre*" despite the risk that these people may also be "fictioneers" (226, italics in original). It is, though, clear to the reader by now that Mr Vincent's own collection of interviews has an equally end-directed intentionality, particularly his desire for more personal stories from his interviewees that would dispel the image of Coetzee as "a cold and supercilious intellectual" (235). It is also clear from the interviews that he has failed in this regard, as most confirm his character as "wooden," without "special sensitivity" and as bordering on the autistic in matters of the body. So to whom is the reader to turn for a more nuanced version of Coetzee the man?

The final undated fragments from the notebooks provide a very different tone, even from the dated entries provided at the beginning of the book, which tend to a more political perspective on the writer's reporting of events on his return to South Africa. These final entries project more deeply personal, emotional material that centres on the father/son relationship. If the biographer has failed to produce an image of Coetzee that is warm and personable in the interviews, these final notebook entries, despite their italicized commentary that suggests they may be used later for other purposes, come closer to it. For it is here that we return to the realm of guilt and confes-

sion. In explaining, for example, his accompanying his father to a rugby match at Newlands, the writer of the notebooks records his feelings as follows:

> He goes with his father…because sport…is the strongest surviving bond between them, and because it went through his heart like a knife to see his father…go off to Newlands like a lonely child. (245)

The compassion of the son for the father's loneliness and the way it pierced his heart speaks more about the man and his emotional life than anything the reader has encountered previously in the text. Similarly, his awareness that he would be a better son if he knew what his father cared about or wanted, in the absence of his talking about himself, or keeping a diary or writing letters, is made even more poignant by the fact that his only insight into his father's state of mind is provided by a quiz entitled "Your Personal Satisfaction Index" that his father has perhaps deliberately left lying around. In it, his father has scored a total of 6 out of 20, suggesting a less than fulfilled life (251). Thus the sense he has that his father's family is without passion (247) extends also to his own assessment of himself as a "gloomy fellow; a wet blanket; a stick in the mud" (248).

The adult son's memory of his "mean and petty deed" as an adolescent of scratching his father's favorite Renata Tebaldi record is one that has haunted him with a remorse that has "grown keener" with time. This returns us to the "Agenbite of inwit" (4) reference at the beginning of the text, the prick of conscience that demands confession. Trying to atone for this misdeed by replacing the record was, he insists, his way of seeking his father's forgiveness

> *For countless acts of meanness…In sum, for all I have done since the day I was born, and with such success, to make your life a misery.* (250, italics in original)

The directness of this first-person address marks a significant shift in the text, making it seem less mediated, more felt. But there is no response from his father. It is equally heart-wrenching to read of the son's inability to reach out, physically or emotionally, prior to his father's operation, an operation that will render the father forever wordless. The son's inability to interpret his father's needs is even more tragic now. The dilemma of the ending of the text where the son is trapped either into responsibility for his father or into abandoning him is clearly not really a choice at all.

So, as readers, we do after all gain some insight into the emotional life of the writer through these final notebook entries. But again we are warned of the "double thoughts" of confession as well as the intentionality, the fictioneering, of all writerly material, whether diaries, letters, notebooks, autobiographies or biographies. In the end, there is no one version, only versions, of a life and the more lasting impression, apart from rare moments when "true confession" seems momentarily attainable, is that the subject of the life-writing will inevitably both betray and/or be betrayed.

In his preamble to reading one of the notebook entries to Martin in *Summertime*,

Mr Vincent suggests that he suspects that the entry "was intended to fit into the third memoir, the one that never saw the light of day" (205) and refers to its use of the same third-person convention as in *Boyhood* and *Youth*. This teasing self-referentiality (the book we are reading is, of course, the third memoir "that never saw the light of day" disguised as a partial and perhaps even unfinished biography) is in keeping with the ironic humor deployed throughout *Summertime*, particularly in Coetzee's use of the distancing effect of biography to make comments on himself through the words of others. An example is when Julia says: "I know he had a reputation for being dour, but John Coetzee was actually quite funny" (63). In writing the self as other, Coetzee is able to draw attention both to the constructed nature of any version of the self and to the ethical implications of such writing. In doing so, he emphasizes the impossibility of representing "truth" in any genre and the double bind of self-interested confession that is an inevitable part of autobiography. But, as Derek Attridge points out, even such doubts about verifiability or the status of a "true confession" do not preclude the work encapsulating, for the reader as well as the writer, what Attridge calls a "certain form of truth" (161) and what Coetzee calls, perhaps more circumspectly, the "aura of truth" (*Youth* 138).

【Notes】

1. This paper is a version of the chapter "Scenes from Provincial Life," written expressly for *A Companion to the Works of J. M. Coetzee*, edited by Tim Mehigan, by Camden House, an imprint of Boydell & Brewer, Rochester, New York and Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK, to be published in late 2011.

2. Hermione Lee points out that while *Youth* was published without a subtitle in the United Kingdom, the US edition was indeed subtitled "Scenes from Provincial Life II" (Hermione Lee, "Heart of Stone: J. M. Coetzee" in *Body Parts: Essays on Life Writing* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2005)167 – 76, 167. Coetzee's description of *Summertime* as the third "instalment" of "Scenes from Provincial Life" suggests that he would have preferred to have had this subtitle in all editions of *Youth*, thereby avoiding the confusion caused to some reviewers.

3. J. M. Coetzee, "Confession and Double Thoughts: Tolstoy, Rousseau, Dostoevsky." in *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, ed. David Attwell. 251 – 293.

4. J. M. Coetzee, "Fictions of the Truth," *The Age* 13 May 2000, 12 (attributed to *The Telegraph*, London, no date).

5. See p. 225 of *Summertime* and Frank Kermode's review, "Fictioneering" in the *London Review of Books*, 8 October (2009)9 – 10.

6. Margaret Lenta, "Autrebiography: J. M. Coetzee's *Boyhood* and *Youth*," *English in Africa* 30. 1 May(2003)157 – 69. Lenta gives the examples of Caesar's *Gallic War and the Civil War*, Lord Hervey's eighteenth-century memoir and Christopher Isherwood's memoir, *Lost Years: A Memoir 1945 – 51*. She also points out a number of parallels in subject matter between Coetzee's first two memoirs and Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Others have pointed out that there are further precedents for this third-person autobiography. These include Dirk Klopper's example of Henry Adams' *The Education of Henry Adams* (Dirk Klopper, "Critical Fictions in J. M. Coetzee's *Boyhood* and *Youth*," *Scrutiny2: Issues in English Studies in South Africa*, 11.1 (2006)22 – 31, 30, Note 6). Derek Attridge refers to both Henry Adams and Joyce as "two obvious precursors" but points out that they both use the past tense, a choice that introduces "adult irony to complicate"

childhood naiveté (Derek Attridge, *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading: Literature in the Event*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004)141.

7. My emphases.

8. Derek Attridge also mentions Turgenev and George Eliot's works as possible sources for Coetzee's sub-title, particularly Eliot's *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life* (Derek Attridge, *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading: Literature in the Event*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004)155, Note 20.

9. It is interesting to compare the account given on p. 97 of *Summertime* with the parallel account on p. 94 of *Boyhood*. In both, John unburdens himself to his cousin (she is called Agnes in *Boyhood*, Margot in *Summertime*) and in *Summertime*, the John-figure admits to being in love with her. An episode which is not mentioned in *Boyhood* but given prominence in *Summertime* is John's cruelty to the locust. In *Summertime* this is represented as a shameful memory which he remembers with pain and for which he asks forgiveness every day.

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库切书写的文类策略:虚构与非虚构的杂糅文本

蔡圣勤

内容摘要:库切作为后现代与后殖民交锋的代表人物,其作品创作和文学批评都非常别具一格。其文学思想中孤岛意识的表达方略之一就是杂糅虚构与非虚构文本,使"真"与"幻"、"虚"与"实"全面交织,以应付文字审查制度和帝国意识的责难。其生存状况的"夹缝性"和文化选择的两难性通过这一方略亦虚亦实而又淋漓尽致地表达了其批判殖民主义和帝国强权的信念。

关键词:库切　文论思想　文类策略　杂糅文本

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Title　The Genre Strategy of Coetzee's Writing: Hybridization of Fiction and Non-fiction

Abstract　Coetzee is one of the representative modern writers when postmodernism meets with the postcolonialism. His novels and critical works are all very special and each of them is unique. One of this writing strategies to express "the Island Consciousness" of his his theoretical thoughts is hybridization of fiction and nonfiction, which overlapping "the real" and " the unreal;" "the fictive" and "the fact" to confront the censorship and censure from inner imperial consciousness. The situation of "living in between" and dilemma of cultural identity are expressed with this strategy to criticize western colonialism and imperialism hegemony.

Key words　Coetzee; literary criticism thought; genre strategy; hybridized text

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如我们所知,后现代主义作品大都具有较强语言实验性甚至是话语游戏。后现代主义以"语言"为中心的特色,证明文本的意义实际上是个语言表达问题。在后现代的文本中,现实只不过是语言虚构的假象,是语言所创造的"(Lyotard 73)。由于语言本身的虚构性,可致使一切由语言表述的文本都不可避免地被划入虚构的范围之中。传统小说是典型的虚构作品,它以虚假的语言虚构出虚假的故事去反映本身就虚假的现实,从而把读者引入到双重的虚假中。而后

现代小说家的创作特色及书写的主要任务由以前的虚构故事及其情节,转变为跳出故事就是去揭示这种欺骗,把现实的虚构的虚假也同时展现在读者面前。随着这种创作的倾向性的发展,伴随发生的就是以戏仿或讽仿为主要范式,对小说这一形式和叙述本身进行反思、解构和颠覆。由于语言文字的虚构性,使人容易产生了出一个结论,即"一切使用语言进行表述的文本都可能具有虚构性"(凯尔纳 224)。后现代理论的这一阐述对人文社会学科的冲击是巨大的,它甚至让人开始怀疑一切我们所固有的知识体系,包括历史、文化、政治、新闻、法律等等。在此之前,除了文学承认自身的虚构性,其他学科则认为自己的努力是对"本真"或"终极真理"的追求,可是如果承认了语言的虚构性,也就是承认了自身学科也具有虚构性,从而动摇了为之奋斗终身的本根。

一、虚构的语言和虚构的文本

正是由于"语言游戏的多元性和异质性"(Lyotard 73),在由语言表述的文本中,虚构之中有真实,真实之中有虚构。真实与虚构交织在一起,构成的文本本身。因此,传统的对虚构与非虚构的划分(Fiction and Non - fiction),无法满足文本的这一特征。库切,作为一个学界的先锋,作为一个学者型的作家,大胆地对这一"先锋性"的理论进行了实验。他创作的《伊丽莎白·科斯特洛:八堂课》、《动物的生命》等就是这样的杂糅了虚构与非虚构的作品,且取得了极大的成功。

在《伊丽莎白·科斯特洛:八堂课》中,库切虚构了一位名叫伊丽莎白·科斯特洛的作家,这位澳大利亚的作家作品不多却很有影响,这有点像库切本人。也许我们可以把伊丽莎白视为库切的部分替身,的确有许多因素给人这种暗合,包括早年的欧洲经历,包括作为在英语世界中的边缘身份的作家,以及对西方基督教主流文化所持的相似的批判态度,对于文学作品获奖的态度(库切的态度低调,数次未出席文学奖的颁奖),甚至由于热爱动物、为动物的生存呼吁、和自身的素食习惯等。当然,科斯特洛毕竟是库切虚构和塑造的一个人物,也有很多的不对等关系,不同的性别、不同的年龄等等,可这也恰是库切的高明之处。他让科斯特洛走向前台,言他所言、言他未所言、言他所不能言。充分利用巴赫金所说的对话和复调,形成了多声部的杂音,表现作品中作者的"外在立场"(Exotopie)。这样使他对世界的观察比她更透彻看法更有分寸。库切让伊丽莎白去替他发言,让她去面对驳诘、冷落、孤独和各种尴尬场面。借着伊丽莎白的那股偏执高傲的气势,毫无顾忌地将自己对理性的批判引向极致。

虽然,这部作品形式上如一部小说,用虚构的人物将八个演讲串起来,整体上看,是一个有情节,有场景的故事,可内容上却是文学理论和批评的观点,而且还是一部文论集。更为令人惊异的是,这部文论集的部分内容,有几篇在该"小说"2003 年出版前已经发表过,如 1997 年的《什么是现实主义?》[1]、1998 年的《小说在非洲》[2]、1999 年的《动物的生命》[3] 和 2001 年的《非洲的人文学科》[4],更

有2007年的《灾年日记》等等,这一特征与其他的文论集如《陌生者的海岸》、《内部的工作》(Inner Workings)的特征相似。内容中关于文学的如《什么是现实主义?》和《小说在非洲》都深入地探讨了文学的本质问题。文学之于作家是一种什么样的命运,文学的意义以及功能的局限,创作心理机制中主体伦理的保持和丧失问题,等等。在作品第三第四个章节里,把《动物的生命》分成两个部分,并分别加上了小标题:哲学家与动物、诗人与动物。尽管从主题上看似动物权力的保护问题,实际上,思想上升到了哲学的高度去看待生命、去看待人性本源,及其与文学的关系。在后面的几个章节了,库切集中讨论了理性问题,爱欲问题,邪恶问题,神学和信仰问题,都是与文学的书写相关。

很多人对这部作品的文类归属问题提出了质疑。有人认为他是小说,它有虚构的人物主线、滑稽荒诞的场景设置,"具备了小说的——哪怕是最传统、最普通的小说——一些不可或缺的要素,如人物(有主有次)、如地点(从美洲到欧洲,从陆地到船上),如事件(女主人公不正常的性爱经历,她儿子的艳遇)。而这些因素是实在的,更是虚构的"(北塔 282)。有人认为它是非小说(non - fiction),也有人认为它是超小说(meta - fiction)、有人认为它是非非小说(non - non - fiction),更有人认为它是一部演讲集而已,而且是一部哲学演讲集。以至于《泰晤士报·文学增刊》在2003年评选年度最佳英文小说时,评委会的专家们狠心地把它从预选名单中给剔除了,说它根本不是小说。对于读者的质疑和不解,库切没有任何回应,也没作出任何辩解。

当然作为学者兼作家的库切,比谁都明白,小说表达思想的方式是叙述而不是论述,是叙述的方式决定了思想的存在。历史上也有许多作品借人物之口表达思想,如狄德罗《拉摩的侄儿》等。小说家借人物之口表达思想并不奇怪,早在启蒙主义思想家的小说中比比皆是。到了二十世纪萨特和加缪等存在主义的思想家的作品中,都有夹杂着类似的说理的段落。但它们都没有改变从整体上文类的归属,可是,库切的这一特殊表现,不但演讲的篇幅较长,主题间变换的跳跃性较大,而且它们曾经独立成篇,并已经公开发表过。至于是否是借人物之口来表达思想都是个问题。因为,作品中主人公伊丽莎白否定了记者要她谈谈自己的"主要思想是什么?"的问题,而答道:"作家有义务带来思想吗?"(13)这些特征更加凸现了这部作品的实验性,可以说是对传统文本分类学的一次挑战,从这个意义上说,历史上没有哪一部在艺术上可能达到库切的高度,因此,也可以说,将虚构与非虚构杂糅,是库切的一次新的尝试,更是一种书写策略。这种策略,不仅体现在这部作品本身,在2003年诺贝尔奖授奖的答谢辞中,库切的演讲《他和他的人》也是这个策略的体现。《他和他的人》与其说是个演讲词,不如说他又讲了一个故事。2005年的新作《慢人》中,伊丽莎白·科斯特洛这个人物又"客串"进来了,实在让人虚实难辨。这种虚与实的交织,更加体现在库切长期研究的另一个领域,即关于传记和自传的杂合上了。

二、自传与传记中的虚构与真实

许多研究者都已经注意到库切对传记的研究。库切的对传记的研究不仅数量多,涉及面广,人物复杂,自己还写了两部自传体小说。但是,许多论文在对他的自传体小说使用第三人称叙述有许多解释和猜测,却没有注意到,在自传体中使用这种策略是库切特意冲击"虚写"和"实写",留给读者的是接受者的自主性判断,这是对传统传记的书写方法的一次革命性的实验。即使他的非自传体的小说,也有许多暗合的自传体元素,这一现象至今没有被研究者所重视。笔者认为,其实这更是库切的一个书写策略,是另外一种形式的虚构与非虚构的结合。

赵白生先生在《库切的三个背景》中的开篇用近年的诺贝尔奖获得者多与传记文学有关,从而引入库切也写传记,"跟他们一样,也写自传。不同的是,他有点特别。除了写自传之外,他还专门研究自传,靠教自传自娱娱人"(299)。似乎得出结论:他看了伯切尔的两大卷游记,"他也要写一本这样真实的书。"文章中还引用了角谷真知子对《少年时代》(即《男孩》)的评论,认为之所以库切选用第三人称写自传,因为"自传是派生的,附属的,实际上只是起到了一种背景作用,它是小说的背景"(299)。赵先生一方面批评角谷真知子忘却了纪实作品本身的价值,另一方面实际上也采纳了这个"背景性写法"的说法,把它作为库切的三个背景(家庭、社会、国际)讨论的基础。文中这个引用,笔者其实认为这里有一定的误读:"他也要写一本这样真实的书。当然,……描写这些南非的细节并非难事。'难的是,给整体赋予一种氛围:真实的氛围。正是这种氛围,让书走上图书馆的书架,因而进入世界历史"(299)。

笔者并不赞同说库切将这种背景写法作为"秘不示人"的利器。这实际上是将虚构与真实交织的写法来挑战传统。只有体现了真实的氛围,他的书写才能真正走向"图书馆的书架",才能实实在在地"进入世界历史"。这段在《青春》中的表白,其实也是告诉人们,传记,包括自传,它的所谓"真实性"实质上与虚构密不可分:从脉络上也许是事实的表述,在细节上就不可能有绝对真实可言。何况事件发生之时所思所想的记载并非"即时性",只能是后来的追忆和补充、甚至是虚构,其实所书写的就是书写时的"现在追思"。因此,作者大可以跳出来叙事,或者作为旁观者叙事,如果从这个角度看,还能有比选用"第三人称"更为合适的选择吗?而睿智的库切在多种场合下都声称《少年时代》和《青春》的确是自传体小说。这样,将更加使一般读者确信其"自传性",而且通过他提供给诺贝尔奖评奖委员会的简历相互佐证,阅读者也就更加深信不疑了。这样,真实性的氛围的营造才大功告成。因此他的自传体小说第三人称的选用,实质上是向你表白,你正在阅读的文本已经使你陷入了"真实"与"虚构"交织的如历史叙述的大网之中。

1984 年,库切就任南非开普敦大学英文系主任,就职演讲的题目是"自传里的真实";2003 年,他执教美国芝加哥大学社会思想委员会,讲授的课程就有"自

传”。尽管笔者因资料的局限未能阅读到演讲稿和课程的细节,但仅从标题来看,结合库切在各种文论和访谈的观点,可以推断出演讲和课程中均有一定程度的对自传体内的“真实”的质疑。比如,库切在《自传与忏悔》一文发表时接受大卫·阿特维尔(Attwell)教授的采访,其中谈到了该论文出自重读托尔斯泰和陀思妥耶夫斯基的传记。库切对这两位小说家的倾慕十分明显,谈到描写“真实”时,库切说:

> 我阅读他们选择了他们自己的角度,即,除了颠覆世俗关于真实的怀疑论外,还按照他们用来讲述真实的权力,支持怀疑论的策略来支持他们(‘什么是真实?’)。我在他们的另类方式上认同托尔斯泰和陀思妥耶夫斯基,认同他们作为真正哲学思辨的作家,抑或作为具有哲思权力的作家,尽管这些‘思辨’总携带着错误的暗示。(243 – 4)

此后,在论文《自传与忏悔》[5] 中,库切用 43 个页码的笔墨集中论述了“真实”问题,其中不仅讨论了作品的真实、人物的真实、作者的真实,而且还将“真实”(Truth)分解为“他者真实”(the Other truth)、“意识真实”(conscious truth)、“无意识真实”(unconscious truth)、“深层真实”(deeper truth)、“高层真实”(higher truth)、“内在真实”(inner truth)、“外在真实”(exterior truth),等等。再比如,在另一部文集《陌生者的海岸》中,发表了库切通过研究传记作家约瑟夫·弗兰克(Joseph Frank)创作的惶惶五大卷《陀思妥耶夫斯基传》而写成的论文《<不可思议的岁月>中的陀思妥耶夫斯基》,其中关于陀思妥耶夫斯基的“真实”生活及传记作家的写作真实意图时,库切指出:

> 弗兰克尽管是一个传记作家,但他只写文学传记,好比他早在第一卷的序言中就告戒读者:“想在以下的内容里寻找一篇传统传记的人将会非常失望…。我不是从生活写到作品,而是以另外一种方式。我的目的是释译出陀思妥耶夫斯基的艺术。”第二卷修改了这些相当朴实的目标。弗兰克承认在第二卷里他实际正努力做的就是将传记和社会文化历史与文学批评融合在一起。(124)

弗兰克“只写文学传记”,他的目的是“释译出陀思妥耶夫斯基的艺术”,换句话说,那是他的主观阐释,而非描写对象的真实。“在书中传记的几个章节里,读者找不到讲述陀思妥耶夫斯基这个人的成长和发展的文字”(125),“弗兰克更大的目标是阐明陀思妥耶夫斯基创作的背景——一方面是个人的,另一方面是社会、历史、文化、文学,和哲学的——他成功了”(126)。

库切的另一篇论文《论多丽丝·莱辛和她的自传》在阐述这一观点时,也有明确的表述,而且认为作家自传的目的并非表现真实。这里谈及的虚构的小说

与自传的关系。莱辛认为历史之舟是由比意识更深层的潮流所推动的——深沉节奏的假设便是一个略显古怪的例子——这种观点在她的自传中不断重现。"当前自传计划面临的问题之——她也很好地认识到了——即相对于推论性的自我分析,小说有更好的方法去应对无意识的力量。""因此完成自传计划的四分之三后,她以小说家而非传记作家的身份,发表了结论;"毫无疑问,小说能够更好地展现真实"(241)。而对于莱辛自传的真实目的,库切指出:

> 莱辛的生活有相当的公众性和政治性,因此对于那些"选择保持沉默"不写回忆录的人她自觉很是佩服。那么她的自传用意何在?她的答案很坦率:"自我辩护"。至少有五部自传已在计划之列。"你试图通过写自传来言明自己的生活"。(240)

库切对传记的研究涉及很广泛,除了上述对《陀思妥耶夫斯基传记》研究、对《莱辛的自传》研究之外,还有对里尔克(Rilke)的研究、对达芙妮·鲁克(Daphne Rooke)的研究、对布莱顿巴赫(Breytenbach)的回忆录的研究,等等,而在2007年新出版的文集《内部的工作:2000 – 2005 文论集》中还有对威廉·福克纳的传记的研究(189)。

从另一方面看,正如莱辛所言,虚构的小说或许更能够展现真实。库切在他的虚构作品中却大量地展现了他自传性的暗合。首先,库切的早期作品《雅格布·库切之讲述》,著作"翻译者"的署名用自己的真名,原文作品编著者的署名是"译者"的父亲(实为虚构)。这部小说,单从标题来看,所有读者会以为这是作者库切先祖的真实叙述,其中史料似乎是南非开普敦开拓的真实历史。(当然,当库切在美国德克萨斯大学图书馆读到这一史料时,库切本人都以为这是他的先祖的记述。)而且在叙事手法上,库切使用了第一人称更是似乎历史真实的再现;文中使用的是英语的现在时态进行叙述,这样,他没有把叙述定格在历史的时间上,却使读者以为是正在发生的事件。其次,在另一部虚构小说《耻》中,主人公的南非白人后裔的文化身份、文学教授的职业特征、故事的地点场景选择在开普敦大学、主人公的年龄及离婚的背景,甚至情爱经历都与作者在一定程度上出现暗合现象,但它确实是部虚构作品,作者从来没有表示过有什么自传色彩。除去上述两部之外,在《伊丽莎白·科斯特洛:八堂课》这部半虚构作品中,如前文所析,也表现出了这种暗合。而《彼得堡的大师》以其传记为素材,则更是对陀思妥耶夫斯基的真实与虚构的交织表述,这已经是公认的且不言自明的结论。

库切本人也曾多次指出:"因为从广义上讲,所有的写作都是一种自传;不论是文学评论还是小说,你写的每一样作品都在被你书写的同时又在书写着你本人"(17)。这是库切在接受南非威特沃特斯维大学(现为约克大学)的大卫·阿特维尔(David Attwell)教授采访(被收入《双重视角》中),谈到他的作品与文论的关系时说不论他的创作的作品还是所写的文论都是在"讲事实"的表态,同样

适合于佐证他的自传体文本和非传记性写作。

三、语义的模糊性与经典的互文联想

语言的语义常具有不确定性,文学言说的双重困境就在于“言”和“意”之间转化存在矛盾。“语言本身固有的含义常遮蔽了意义的表达;同时,先于个体存在的语言对思维也进行一定的限制。”(孙文宪 48)这种语言原本固有的含义常常通过文字的呈现向读者“播撒”着政治、经济、文化、传统与习俗、乃至个人经验等诸方面的“能指”,他与书写者所要表述的“所指”永远无法弥合。库切,作为一个名副其实的语言学家和文学批评家,深知语言的语义的多义性和“能指”的不确定性,并恰当地运用这一策略,收到了很好的效果:它既让读者产生了与经典的互文的联想,将经典铺设为叙述的背景,又暗含了对经典的重述与解构、对历史的批判与颠覆。

利用了语义的不确定性,库切在虚构作品和非虚构作品的书名的选用上别具一格,只要通过认真地分析,不难看出这一策略所带来的巨大好处。1986 年,库切取材《鲁滨逊漂流记》,写成的小说《福》(*Foe*)。“foe”的字面原意是“敌人”、“仇敌”。从书名我们可以看出,这部小说具有后现代主义的反讽意味。鲁滨逊是英国或者说是欧洲早期殖民者的代表形象,当年《鲁滨逊漂流记》的作者丹尼尔·笛福(Defoe)是把鲁滨逊作为一个正面人物来塑造和颂扬的。但是,这个经典,在后殖民主义者看来,鲁滨逊是个殖民英雄,所以也就是殖民地人民的对立面——敌人。也就是说,笛福通过文学给人们塑造了一个形象,同时也给殖民地人民施加了一个敌人——鲁滨逊只是一个给殖民者带来幸福的人,他给被压迫民族带来的是失落、痛苦与不幸。所以库切要解构这个笛福创造的敌人形象。在英语的语义中,De 作为前缀,含义是 Down,有“下”、“取下”、“拆下”、“打倒”等含义。也就是大家所熟知的 “De”加上“construction”, 新造成“deconstruction”表达“拆解”、“解构”之意。从字面意义上来看,“Defoe”一词可以理解为“解构敌人”或者“剥下敌人的伪装”,使他显露出本来的面目,成为赤裸裸的敌人(foe)。更加发人深思的是,Foe 又恰好是笛福的本来姓氏。在日耳曼语系中,De 置放在姓氏前是有贵族身份的,在英法等国中比较常见(比如保罗·德·曼的原文是 Paul De Man)。这就使人会产生更多的联想,对经典的联想、对作家权威挑战的联想、对鲁滨逊这个叙述史上的“英雄”神话原型解构的联想等等。

从另外一部小说《耻》(*Disgrace*)的命名,则更能看出语言大师巧用语义的不确定性这一策略。首先,将 Disgrace 书名译称《耻》是有根据的,张冲教授在他的论文《越界的代价》中详细地论证了这一观点。正如本论文第一章中所述,国内外的许多研究也都是围绕“耻”的这一主题展开论述的。因研究库切而著名的德里克·阿特里杰教授在他的研究论著《库切及阅读方法:事件中的文学》中也认为书名的意义应该确定在“耻辱”的语义上。他说:“Disgrace 一词的反义词可对应为‘荣誉’(honor),因为《牛津英语辞典》关于 Disgrace 一词的解释总会

和 dishonor 相联系。换而言之,公众目睹的耻辱与公众的尊敬相对应,也只能由公众的尊敬来抵销,只有通过荣誉才能挽回耻辱"(Attridge 178)。可是,当我们看到拉什迪的小说 Shame 也译为《耻辱》时,仅从中文译名来看其中的差异无法辨别。其实,语言从一种文字译为另外一种文字时,伴随着翻译同时就已经消失了许多的东西:它暗含的文化、它暗示的隐喻、它原有文字的历史沉淀、甚至原来文字中的音韵所携带的美,等等。这在诗歌的翻译中多有论述。从构词法上分析,disgrace 一词由两个部分组成:dis 和 grace。Dis 表示"分离"、"离开"、"没有"、"失去"等含义,如 disconnect(断开连接)、discord(离心离德)等等(李平武 16)。而 grace 则通常意义是表示"优雅"、"文静","体面"、"情理"、"宽厚"、"仁慈"等等,而这些意义都通过 dis 这个词缀解构了。在西方社会,以基督教为主体的人群几乎每餐饭前要做的就是 say a grace(做祷告,做感恩祷告),这里 disgrace 可表示"没有了感恩"之意,或者"失去了仁慈"之意。如果结合作品的叙述,从深层次的寓意上分析,白人和黑人,殖民者和被殖民者,谁对谁应有感恩?谁对谁应该仁慈?如果从这个意义上说,作品描写的就是一个"没有了感恩的"、或者是"仁慈的缺失"的状态。库切在《双重视角》里曾经定义过"grace":"grace 是一种条件,在这种条件下真理可以被清楚且不盲目地讲出来"(392)。从库切这个意义上说,Disgrace 就是一种没有真理的、没有了感恩的、没有了体面的混沌状态。在《耻》中,主人公卢里在拜访女学生的家长时也说,"我陷入了一种 disgrace 的状态不能自拔,""对于上帝来说,我这样永无止境地生活在 disgrace 状态之中,惩罚是否已经足够了?"(172)

这种发散的语义还表现在作品的人物的命名上面。前文谈到了作品暗含的真正主人公露茜的命名问题。卢里是按著名诗人华兹华斯笔下"露茜"为女儿取名的(Belling 46)。诗中露茜所抱有的人生哲学是一种无奈的结果。从作品为她命名的意图,似乎可以看出她必将成为默默无闻、与世无争、用自然主义哲学处世的人,也许同华兹华斯笔下的"露茜"同一命运。但是到最后,卢里放弃了一切,包括他的女儿、他对正义和语言的看法、他创作拜伦史诗剧的梦想、对濒死动物的爱,甚至自己的思想。这种与华兹华斯的互文联系,在作品中即有交代。另一个人物梅兰妮(Melainie),Melanie 与 Melody 同音,意为"美妙的旋律",这里代表文人对"美妙的旋律"的诗性追求(后文详细论述)。当我们把梅兰妮的姓 Isaacs 和大卫·卢里的姓 Lurie 联系起来,Isaacs Lurie 与十六世纪犹太神秘主义者和希伯来学者 Isaac Luria 谐音。该学者关注的就是人的原罪和灵魂的救赎(王敬慧 66)。通过作品的人物,库切还实现了与另外一个南非的诺贝尔奖获得者戈迪默的小说《六尺乡土》(*Six Feet of the Country*)的互文。在《耻》中有一个阴影式的人物,他的意志似乎左右着真正的主人公露茜的思想和抉择,这个人物甚至控制着事态的发展,他抑制了卢里的报复冲动,包庇着少年黑人罪犯,最后竟然使露茜甘愿嫁给他以寻求保护和生存,将她的土地也划归到他的名下。这个人就是曾经是露茜的帮工——黑人佩特鲁斯(Petrus)。但在戈迪默的《六

尺乡土》中,佩特鲁斯是一个黑人工头。由于处于种族隔离时代的南非,他如同其他被殖民者一样失去了土地、身无分文,甚至无法安葬逝去的亲人,受尽了白人统治者的凌辱。在《耻》描述中的后种族隔离时代,佩特鲁斯彻底翻身了。他不仅可以买地、置房、跟白人做邻居,甚至还能让殖民者的后裔甘愿"归还"被他们"占有"的土地,直至占有她的身体,而且还是当他的第三个老婆。这正如法农在《黑皮肤,白面具》中所说的,"从历史上看,我们知道黑人犯了同白种女人睡觉的罪是要被阉割的"(53)。而现在的佩特鲁斯则得到了"满足制服欧洲女人并带有某种骄傲的报复味道的婚姻","在一个欧洲女人身上为她的祖先几个世纪以来使我的祖先所遭受的一切雪耻报仇"(52)。

库切的其他作品也都有这个特点,都在一定程度上对经典具有一种互文关系。比如,《等待野蛮人》与希腊诗人卡瓦菲斯的同名诗作及贝克特《等待戈多》的互文关系,以期再次"揭示现代文明理性下的虚伪"(*He and His Man* 12)同时还与殖民书写的作品吉卜林(Kipling)的《地区长官》(*The Head of District*)形成了对应关系。1977 年出版的《内陆深处》与康拉得的名著《黑暗之心》(*Heart of Darkness*)也形成了互文关系。康拉得的小说《黑暗之心》有两种含义,一是指黑非洲的心脏地带,另外是指文明人即殖民者来到非洲之后,从外到里进行掠夺,并从精神上进行腐蚀的行径。《内陆深处》中的非洲还是那个停滞不前的非洲,移民者毫无生气地定居在被冷落的边缘地区。其他作品如《彼得堡的大师》构成的与陀思妥耶夫斯基传记和他的著名小说《群魔》的互文关系,《迈克尔·K 的生活与时代》和《伊丽莎白·科斯特洛:八堂课》构成的与卡夫卡的《城堡》、《审判》等的互文关系,等等,对于一般读者只要稍微留意便不难看出来。

注解【Notes】

1. *What is Realism*? Bennington, Vt. : Bennington College, 1997 该单印本出版之前,本文曾发表在《杂录杂志》(*Salmagundi*, *nos*)1997 年 114 – 115。

2. 《小说在非洲》是 1998 年 11 月 11 日库切应美国加州大学伯克利分校多琳·B·汤森德人文学科中心的邀请,以尤纳讲座基金获奖者的身份为该校的师生及研究生所做的演讲,此文后来于 1999 年发表在伯克利分校汤森德中心(Townsend Center)主编的杂志《文词偶得》(*Occasional Paper*)第 17 期上。

3. *The Lives of Animals*, edited and introduced by Amy Gutmann. Princeton : Princeton Univ. Press, 1999.

4. The Humanities in Africa = Die Geisteswissenschaften in Afrika. München: Carl Friedrich von Siemens – Stiftung, 2001(慕尼黑:西门子基金会).

5. 原论文题目是《忏悔与双重思想:托尔斯泰,卢梭和陀思妥耶夫斯基》收入文集《双重视角》后,编在了《自传与忏悔》的栏目下,参见该文集第 240 – 293 页。

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A Living Legacy: The Relevance of Tagore in Today's World

Poonam Surie

Abstract Many of the issues that Tagore wrote about are still relevant today and are being faced by societies across the world and will continue to be significant in the decades ahead. Tagore believed in a synthesis of the cultures of the East and the West; the spirituality of the East enriching itself with the rationality and scientific mind of the West. The human spirit above all would sustain and propel humankind forward when all other resources are at an ebb. Always opposed to the dehumanization introduced by industrialization and technology, Tagore believed that it is up to each individual to lead his or her life, governing it with freedom based on well ordered and enduring laws. Tagore's individual is deeply enmeshed in complex networks and he draws from multiple planes in keeping with the realistic world. Tagore's interpretation of religion was quite revolutionary and he believed that atheism was better than superstition of religion and the shackles of ritualism. He recognized multiculturalism and plurality and realized that ethnic and minority groups and their beliefs had to be accepted as a part of the complex fabric of society. He emphasized an educational system where learning was holistic, the aesthetic development of the senses being as important as the development of the intellect. Unlike Einstein, he believed that all scientific laws and objects are connected in some way with human perception and that scientific research should be carried out not just as an end in itself but for the betterment of humankind.

Key words Tagore; multiculturalism; religious plurality; minority rights; Chinese ethnic communities

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The legacy left behind by Tagore is not only a human endeavour to synthesize a sense of living in the world along with social obligations and mores, and find beauty in its existence but it is also an attempt to unravel the tensions behind the struggle with modern life. Tagore is one of the most well known poets of the modern era. He is a novelist, a dramatist, a composer of dance dramas, a folklorist, a satirist, but he is

also a social reformer, a nationalist, and a thinker on race relations. A curiosity and creativity characterized his life, a "ceaseless adventure to the endless further" (qtd in Ghose xii), to use his own language. As we pause and reflect on his thoughts and essays we are struck by how relevant his thinking is for us even today, so many years after his demise. Among the issues that he wrote about, many are being faced by societies across the world and will continue to be significant in the decades ahead. As governments and citizens strive to solve some of these issues, the thought-provoking works of Tagore provide a wealth of ideas which can be used to steer us through the dangerous and treacherous lanes of modern society today.

Tagore's role as a philosopher, an erudite scholar, an educationist and a public figure is no less imposing, varied and significant than that of him as a poet and writer. In him we find an instant example of a person who has a multifaceted personality. The poet and the philosopher cannot be separated just as one cannot, according to him, separate the myriad and complex influences that culture and history as well as modern living have on people. Not only have his poems and essays found an echo in India and the rest of Asia, as also China, but the echo also reverberates in the Western world. His letters, stories, essays and treatises on issues close to the life of the times that he lived in have been valued by many and as we come to the beginning of the second decade of the twenty first century, we cannot but help realize how his philosophy still touches our lives and those of the people of the world in many ways.

Tagore believed in a society where each individual had a right to live as a free person. The sense of freedom and absence of ritualism and symbolism permits us, in Tagore's own philosophy, to look at the world freed from the shackles of social mores and norms, political processes and religions. As he said decades ago, it is time to view the world from a truly realistic and objective view, free from local bias.

A realist and a humanist, Tagore never tried to found a system of philosophy. His writings are an attempt to bridge together metaphysical doctrines of Indian philosophy with the need to respect the dignity of the human individual through compassion and feeling(Bharathi 15). A genius who absorbed different aspects of indigenous and foreign thought and integrated them into his own thinking, Tagore believed in a synthesis of the cultures of East and West and even the different ethnic groups within India. His belief that the spirituality of the East should take within its fold ideas to enrich itself from the rationality and scientific mind of the west; his views on nationalism, his belief that the human being and his or her spirit mattered more than religion, and his view of education as the joy of learning as opposed to it being a burden are issues extremely relevant in the current context of multiethnic, multicultural societies.

Tagore was a believer in realpolitik and dealing with life with its many complexities. Even during the *Swadeshi* movement, Tagore was not a believer in any narrow creed, however popular it may have been. Narrow domestic walls did not allow his vision to be broken into fragments(Ghose xiv). Nor was he a conservative. He belonged on the side of progress. He was convinced that the power of the human heart would transcend all limitations of caste, race and nationality. Human values being similar across the world, he appealed to people to erase boundaries and try to live in harmony and peace.

In his " The Meeting of Races" he writes: "The races of mankind will never again be able to go back to their citadels of high walled exclusiveness. They are today exposed to one another, physically and intellectually. The shells which have for so long given them full security within their individual enclosures have been broken, and by no artificial process can they be mended again. So we have to accept this fact, even though we have not fully adapted our minds to this changed environment of publicity, even though through it we may have to run all the risks entailed by the wider expansion of life's freedom" (39).[1] Further, he believed and it is still relevant, that the vastness of the race problem with which modern societies are faced today will either compel citizens to train and adapt to the new globalized world around themselves or the complications arising out of it will fetter all our movements and drag us to our death. In other words, there is no choice but to adapt, evolve and change constantly to keep pace with new problems arising as the world changes rapidly. As internet, Twitter and Facebook bridge distances between citizens from different countries, as borders fade and become irrelevant and as the speed of information moves like lightning across the globe, new solutions have to be found and ideas and concepts combined to form new philosophies and new religions which may be more loosely defined and be a combination of other existing ones.

According to Tagore, thanks to science, speeding vehicles of communication are racing over land and water and even through the air. This, even at his time had meant that there are no longer any geographical barriers. The age of conflict had come. "The outward forces which are bringing men together are running at a great speed; the inner forces which make men united are lagging behind. We, the people of the East who are used to trudging on foot, how can we bear the brunt of the collision? Things which are near us and yet keep aloof, if they have their movement, always give us shocks. Such a conjunction of shocks may not be comfortable, but in certain circumstances may be wholesome"(Tagore, "The Union of Cultures" 434 – 36). How true this rings even today.

Tagore says aptly that the human spirit above all, above machines and material things will sustain and propel humankind forward when all other resources are at an ebb. "When the resources that have sustained us so long have been exhausted, then our spirit puts forth all its force to discover some other source of sustenance deeper and more permanent. This leads us from the exterior to the interior of our storehouse. When muscle does not fully serve us, we come to awaken intellect to ask for its help and are then surprised to find in it a greater source of strength for us than physical power" (40). Overall what is most impressive about Tagore's work is the humanity that is reflected throughout. He was always opposed to the dehumanization introduced by industrialization and technology. Through his works, Tagore has shown us the inner psychology of the poor villager, the urban middle class and the idle rich, without losing sympathy for anyone.[2]

Tagore's view of religion was never about a God of human force but about a God of human personality. Tagore's interpretation of religion was so different from the traditionalists that his views on atheism and communism shocked many. He felt that atheism was better than superstition of religion and the shackles of ritualism. For

example, Tagore felt that folk religion was as important as the study of the *Upanishads*. He translated the works of *Kabir* and *Jnanadas Bagheli* and they were for him no less important than the beliefs of the Bauls, the mystic minstrels of Bengal. He set about bringing to the attention of people the Baul texts. Music was the only source of sustenance of the Bauls as they travelled from place to place, accepting whatever was offered to them as alms for their music.

Tagore did not consider the Baul thought either contradictory to the *Upanishadic* doctrines or as a self-sufficient alternative to them. He accepted its heretic character, its rejection of all institutional religions. This recognition of a folk-world view resistant to canonical texts and institutions provided a fuller view of Indian religious plurality, the coexistence of religious sects, distinctive by social stratification - *brahmanical* and *non-brahmanical*, elite and folk(Das 19).

The fact that Tagore, decades ago had the intuition to think of a multi-religious and multicultural society as it is found today shows the brilliance of a man who had a vision far beyond his time. This shines through his evocative and thought provoking poetry and essays. Today, multiculturalism and minority rights are important issues to be dealt with in Asia as well as the Western world. The growing phenomena of the Naxalite movement in India is said to be currently a most serious threat to its internal security and peace. Other examples are the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka, the members of various hill tribes in Thailand who were traditionally regarded as second class citizens and now look for equality in Thailand; and ethnic groups in China.

Asia as well as Europe is witnessing the rise of identity politics. People are mobilizing along ethnic, religious and cultural lines and demanding recognition of their identity, acknowledgement of their legal rights and historic claims, and a commitment to the sharing of power(Kymlicka Will and Baogang He 1) In the West, shift in ethno-cultural relations are continuously taking place as indigenous people regain their lands, customary law and self- government. The troubles in Northern Ireland and ethnic clashes in Kyrgyzstan are examples of minority group clashes.

Today, as we face divisions and cleavages in societies, peace is key to political stability. In addition, in an interconnected world where boundaries fade and are made redundant for all practical purposes, these cleavages are supplemented with ongoing migration between and within countries[3]. How these ethno-cultural diversities in the West are dealt with is a matter of drawing upon different intellectual traditions and combining them with the thinking of the government in power. But what makes multiculturalism in contemporary Asia so different from its western model is a set of unique and varied factors such as pre and post colonial legacies, democratic transition, territorial tensions across the border, an emerging and increasingly aware and educated middle class and complex political structures. However, in the end, all solutions boil down to engagement of people, tolerance and above all, a sense of what it means to be a human who is part of a civilized society. Tagore's writings certainly seem to reflect this and beyond doubt he has, even in his time, touched upon the nerve of current diversities and ethno-cultural issues in these countries.

No less brilliant was Tagore's treatise on "*Swaraj*" or Self-Rule. He writes in his essay, "The Union of Cultures" that according to the *Upanishads*, immutable

laws have been made for all time to come, and it is up to each individual to lead his life, governing (and not governed by) it with freedom based on well ordered and enduring laws. In other words, man does not need to fear any divine being. These laws of matter and those of the mind, used together make the individual grow in greatness (428 – 429). "The empire of the universe is yours, yours its wealth, yours its armoury of forces. May yours be the victory!" (Tagore, "The Union of Cultures" 428) Self-rule can only be achieved when the science of the unchangeable laws of matter are brought into harmony with the laws of our mind. In other words, all persons are clean and to call them unclean merely because of their religion is keeping the intellect in a state of delusion. In this state, there can never be a spiritually healthy society.

According to Tagore, in the beginning the East was much more advanced in terms of science than the Western countries. The positions got reversed because the West was able to harness the science to use it in a more useful way. The way in which this can be remedied and reversed is through education. The *Upanishads* teach that we should "gain protection from death by the cult of the finite, and then by the cult of the infinite you shall attain immortality" (Tagore, "The Union of Culture" 434). By union he did not mean uniformity. Material and spiritual, kept separate, in their own respective provinces can lead to a unity of the West and East.

Tagore had a great deal of respect for the interconnectedness of the world. As Amartya Sen summarizes Tagore's views, one could be a citizen of the world, without being a citizen of the world state. Hence home and world would not be two ends of a continuum but overlapping categories.

What is the "new" perspective that Tagore brought to the debate about people in society? Two major points are worth stating: Tagore's view of the nature of individuals, and, arising out of this view of the individual, his ideas about the dynamics of groups and culture.

Tagore differs fundamentally from the "Western perspective" in his notion of the individual. The individual of Tagore's model is not isolated but is one nucleus in a web of relationships. His belief is drawn from a *Upanishadic* understanding of all things of the universe as manifestations of the same underlying reality system. His individual is neither similar to the liberal version of the rational, self-interested individual, nor the communitarian version of the autonomous individual who is committed to community bonds. Tagore's individual is deeply enmeshed in multiple networks and there are no dichotomies between self-interest and duty towards others. He draws from multiple planes in keeping with the realistic world in which we live. Hence Tagore's concept of freedom is based on understanding ties instead of pursuing self-interest. Based on his idea of the individual tied to the Universe, Tagore's conception of interpersonal and intergroup relations necessarily focuses on acknowledging ties (Purkayastha 49).

Tagore's commitment is to unity in diversity, acknowledging interdependencies, creating channels of communication and exchange as a way of creating a society where multiplicity and pluralism are a way of life. His reference is to the daily Hindu prayers where the individual acknowledges ties to the Universe of people, plants, animals and energy. This conscious awareness and personal commitment to a set of values that

put a human-in-the-universe above the person defined by nation states or other identities, would lead to better ties among people in different parts of the world. It would be difficult to draw the line between insiders and outsiders while one consciously acknowledged ties to the universe.

As long as societies continue to benefit from each other's insights, they would progress and grow in the true sense of the word.

A very important element of Tagore's beliefs was the constantly changing and evolving society. The commitment to the web of relationships meant that the aim was to create and recreate social systems that support such actions. Tagore's model recognizes multiple allegiances, making it possible to respect one's own country without strident patriotism and cultural isolation. So one can be committed to one's own culture without creating walls of sectarianism or viewing culture as fixed. One can respect tradition without becoming enslaved by outdated rules and rituals. It requires seeing the home in the world(Purkayastha 61).

As our lives are increasingly influenced by happenings in other parts of the world, we are confronted by Tagore's core issues of unity in diversity. How do we maintain rights of people whose religions, languages, social practices, codes of living are different from ours? We have two choices among others: Either the old ones of assimilation and homogenization or then the recognition of differences, identities and individual practices recognizing universal interdependence.

Since Tagore wrote his poems, essays and letters much water has flown under the bridge. Changes that can only be classified as socio-political have taken place. In India, the diversity of its people has been recognized as, for example, the making official of multiple languages and institutionalizing several civil laws that guarantee the citizens settlement of differences according to the norms of their religions.

As globalization brings citizens across the world face to face with each other, they may be forced to realize that plurality and multiculturalism are the name of the game in today's world. Religions, languages, ethnic diversity, arts and science, culture and economics, local and global, politics and spirituality, all are intertwined and inseparable in the complex lives we all lead. Moving from the boundaries of home to the world, we remain indebted to a sage who once was. His ideas remain still fresh and relevant even today.

Tagore's thoughts on education and the educational system are well known. He expressed in the strongest terms through his writings that learning by rote is a burden on the individual and what was needed is an education where learning is holistic, where the surroundings are conducive to learning, so that it becomes a joy. He believed that between individuals, whatever the antagonisms in business were, they would disappear in the field of culture. His vision was that his country should become a centre of culture for the world where East would meet West. This vision is still shared by many. Education has been and still is, of vital concern for the policy makers. An increase in the number of educational institutions, modifying curricula to suit the changing requirements of the globalized world, vocational studies, professional courses where hands on experience and training is needed and emphasized are much needed and we are, in India, making an effort to move in that direction. What needs

attention is knowledge of conducting oneself with grace and dignity, politeness and courtesy with members of the civil society and empathy towards others. These are as important components of education as academic requirements. The introduction of "Value education" as a subject in young learners is a step in that direction.

Tagore admired thinkers and reformists such as Raja Rammohan Roy because even though the latter did not study English till he was much older, he was a profound scholar of Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and Hebrew in order to study the Old Testament in its original oriental setting. He knew more of the Sanskrit scriptures and Indian philosophy than any contemporary *pundit*. His learning, because of its depth and comprehensiveness, did not merely furnish him with materials for scholarship, but trained his mind for the free acceptance of truth.

Tagore felt that the colonial system of education followed at his time, created a cadre of clerks who worked for the colonial masters, not true thinkers. His ideas on education thus were that education should adapt itself to the particular cultural features of the country where it was being taught. According to him the East has been educated along Western lines and therefore has developed a contempt of itself which continued to the days in which he lived(Tagore, "The Way to Unity" 465 – 467). Studying culture, as he says, just for the sake of brandishing it before the world without actually understanding, absorbing and feeling it is of no use. As we know, his school Shantineketan developed into a university and rural reconstruction centre where he tried to develop an alternative model of education that stemmed from his own learning experiences. In Tagore's view an aesthetic development of the senses was as important as the development of the intellect. Music, literature, art, craft and drama were thus as important as science and mathematics. Tagore's dream was to create *Vishva Bharati*, a national centre for the arts where individuals would work together in a common pursuit of truth and realize "that artists in all parts of the world have created forms of beauty, scientists discovered secrets of the universe, philosophers solved the problems of existence, saints made the truth of the spiritual world organic in their own lives, not merely for some particular race to which they belonged, but for all mankind"[4].

Tagore's upbringing had been such that he was exposed to a multitude of individuals right from his childhood. Tagore's father had been a leader in social and religious reform, and he encouraged multi-cultural exchange in the family mansion. Tagore's thirteen brothers and sisters were mathematicians, journalists, musicians and novelists. The vitality and creativity of the large and extended family (they also had cousins staying in the same house) gave ample material for thought to the young poets mind, making him believe in a dynamic, open model of education, which he later tried to recreate in his school in Shantineketan. He refused to attend formal school. He felt that a curriculum should revolve organically around nature with classes held in the open air under the trees to learn and appreciate the plant and animal kingdom and the harmony of nature. Students were encouraged to write, create their own publications and produce many illustrated magazines.

Tagore believed that education means the inquisitive minds of young students should be left to investigate nature and absorb their surroundings. Education means

having the freedom of mind, the freedom of heart and the freedom of will. And human beings have to be educated to be not judges, doctors, businessmen and soldiers but to be the makers of their own world and their own destiny. And for that they must have all their faculties developed in the atmosphere of freedom.

He tried to realize a common meeting of East and West by free exchange of ideas between people from the East and the West, to ultimately strengthen conditions of world peace. His vision was to provide at Shantineketan a centre for the research of the study of religion, literature, history, science and the art of Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Zoroastrian, Islamic, Sikh, Christian and other civilizations as well as the culture of the West in an atmosphere of friendship and co-operation, "in the name of the one Supreme Being who is *Shantam*, *Shivam*, *Advaitam*"[5].

Curricula were designed to study the history and culture that brought people together rather than just history, as a dry subject. Art was seen as a way of furthering aesthetic imagination and expressing and examining themes taken from the universe. The overall development of the personality was stressed upon. This path breaking method has paved the way for educational reforms for all times to come. The recent changes and modifications in educational policy for high schools in India has been along the lines that Tagore showed. His methodology of education is unique and can be compared with any of the leading educationists of the world like Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Montessori and Dewey.

Coming to science and rationality, the brilliant conversations between Tagore and Einstein are fascinating and intriguing. Tagore's depth of knowledge and intellect is pitted with the genius of Einstein in a perfectly balanced match of words in which both display, in their own way their honesty of purpose and sincerity. Both gifted and idealistic thinkers, they had very different viewpoints of science. However, in later years Einstein's basic view of sub-atomic nature was abandoned by most quantum physicists, who adopted a position that bears considerable resemblance to the one taken by Tagore(Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson 294). The argument went like this: Einstein said that scientifically, laws and objects remain outside the purview of the human mind. What exists, exists. Tagore, on the other hand, argued that everything is connected in some way with each other and thus with human perception. Tagore fundamentally disagreed with Einstein's theory of realism. "We can never go beyond man in all that we know and feel"(qtd in Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson 294), wrote Tagore in "The Religion of man" and it summed up his beliefs in relation with Einstein's.

If we look at science today, Tagore's belief that all scientific phenomenon fall within the purview of human consciousness seems to ring true. Then going a few steps further, science should be used in a way that it benefits society, not be used against it. Scientists like Werner Heisenberg and Bohr did not agree with Einstein and were of the view that science should be concerned with not what nature is but what we can say about nature. In other words, research just for the sake of research is not as desirable as conducting research on those subjects that can be used for the benefit of human beings.

Tagore did not see eye to eye with another great and legendary person of his

time, Gandhi on a number of issues. For example, he did not understand nor did he approve of Gandhi fasting unto death. Gandhi's approach to education was utilitarian, while Tagore's vision was that of artistic creation. During India's struggle for independence, Tagore tried to reason with Gandhi that he should think of the masses who were looking towards him for leadership and guidance and for their sake, if nothing else, stay alive. According to him, the false sense of nationalism kept an individual from looking at the world as his home and thus keeps him in the narrow confines of his mind. If nationalism means patriotism in a narrow sense of defending one's own country even when one's intellect says that opening one's mind can benefit the citizens, then Tagore did not favour it.

Tagore felt that the absorption of foreign philosophies combined with traditional and indigenous ones can result in a change in society from one level to the next, a betterment of its citizens and their lives. For example, liberal thought of the West combined with the tradition of the east, and western ideologies combined with Confucianism, Buddhism and Hinduism can result in a flowering of ideologies in a climate of globalization, more relevant and enriching than the two separately.

It seems completely in keeping with life in our times that Tagore should have said in his essay, "The Meeting of Races" that "human races owing to their external geographical condition, developed in their individual isolation a mentality that is obnoxiously selfish. In their instinctive search for truth in religion either they dwarfed and deformed it in the mould of the primitive distortions of their own race-mind" (38). He said, and this is very relevant in today's world that when creatures who have always lived in the dark caves of separation find the walls removed suddenly by some catastrophe, "then either they must accept the doom of their extinction or carry on satisfactory negotiations with their wider surroundings" (38).

"This is a great fact. Man, suckled at the wolf's breast, sheltered in the brute's den, brought up in the prowling habit of depredation, suddenly discovers that he is man, and that his true power lies in yielding up his brute power for the freedom of the spirit" (42).

In essence, Tagore held a central place in the Indian renaissance and it would not be wrong to say that in the present context where multiculturalism and globalization have brought citizens of different countries across the world face to face and sharing common spaces with each other, Tagore can be seen as a harmonizer of East and West, the old and the new, the romantic and the rational, the religious and the scientific, between man and machine, man and God. Criticized by some as being confused and sometimes self contradictory, the basic appeal of a brilliant mind thinking far beyond his time was that he thought that "reconciliation, fusion and transcendence are to be attempted and realised... in the heart and soul of man" (Iyengar 111).

His words showed Indians and other Asians a way to self mastery and self-realization. Instead of the narrow and limited vision imposed by nationalism, his thinking has shown the world a wider view in which each individual, each community, each religion, each country has a unique place and in which people can learn from each other, borrow and adopt ideas, work for the betterment of the human race and be the makers of their own destiny.

In conclusion, Tagore's thinking is as relevant today as it was in his time. This brilliant mind had the vision and intelligence to look far beneath the surface and intuitively find some of the answers to the problems that riddle society even today. And all along the beauty of his works lingers with us as we try to see the world through his eyes.

【Notes】

1. Tagore, Rabindranath, "The Meeting of Races." *Tagore for You*. Ed. Sisirkumar Ghose. Calcutta: Visva-Bharati, 1966. 38 – 43. hereafter, only page is given.
2. See Nakagawa, Ulara. "Rabindranath Tagore | New Emissary." *The Diplomat*. 24 May 2010. Web. 22 Nov. 2010. < http://the – diplomat. com/new-emissary/2010/05/24/rabindranath-tagore/ >.
3. Kymlicka, Will. "Multiculturalism and Minority Rights: West and East." *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* 4 (2002): 1 – 27. see http://www. ecmi. de/jemie/download/Focus4 – 2002_Kymlicka. pdf.
4. See O'Connell, K. M. (2003) "Rabindranath Tagore on education", *the encyclopaedia of informal education*, http://www. infed. org/thinkers/tagore. htm.
5. "Rabindranath Tagore on Education - Kathleen M. O'Connell." Contents @ the Informal Education Homepage. Web. 08 July 2010. <http://www. infed. org/thinkers/tagore. htm >.

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Grand Visit to China: Historical Significance of Tagore's China Visit

Wei Liming

Abstract This essay contends that Tagore's 1924 China visit is a great event in the annals of the modern Chinese cultural development and the annals of Sino-Indian relationship. It created a huge impact on the development of culture, especially that of the new literature in China. These conclusions of mine may be divergent from the general view. I shall spell out my proposition in three sections: (1) taking a macro and positive standpoint to find the significance of Tagore's 1924 China visit from a civilizational perspective, (2) examining the misunderstandings and distortions in Chinese and foreign media regarding this visit, and (3) pondering upon deeply what Tagore said in China when we are now in a new era.

Key words Tagore ; China visit; *Talks in China*; Sino-Indian relationship

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People of my generation born and brought up in the People's Republic of China do not have any perceptive understanding of the scene of the 1920s. Professor Ji Xianlin, late lamented doyen of China's India studies, was a witness of history. He saw Tagore in 1924 when he was studying in a middle school at Jinan. "Then I was only 13, did not know much of poetry and even less of India. Yet, I felt at that time he must have been a great man" (Wang 296). During the 1950s, Professor Ji was lecturing at Peking University on "Indian literature in China". In the teaching material he issued to the students in 1958, he wrote:

> In 1924, the great patriotic modern Indian poet Tagore visited China. It was an earth-shaking event at that time. Overwhelming numbers of newspapers and magazines featured special articles introducing the life, thought and works of Tagore. *Fiction Monthly Journal* published special "Tagore Issue" (Nos. 9 and 10 of Volume 14) and an instant extra issue entitled "Welcome to Mr. Rabindranath Tagore!" (No. 4 of Volume 15). In these special and extra issues, Chinese writers exhaustively introduced Tagore, writing his biography, analyzing his thought, selectively featuring his works. It may be said that China was intoxicated in the Tagore fever around the time of his visit to China both beforehand and afterwards. (Wang 289)

In his article titled *Tagore and China* written in 1979, Ji Xianlin wrote: "The most important achievement of Tagore's visit was the strengthening of the traditional friendship between the people of China and India…bringing the friendship of the Indian people, sowing the seeds of friendship in China wherever he went, and carrying back the friendship of the Chinese people…Viewing from the perspective of the history of Sino-Indian relations, his visit became the curtain raiser of the new epoch. From then on, contacts between the two countries gradually warmed up. He vigorously advocated the studies of Chinese language and Chinese culture, and set an example by establishing the Cheena-Bhavana inside the Visva-Bharati."[1]

Ji Xianlin was not only the witness of history, he was also the highest authority of China's studies on Indian literature and Sino-Indian relations. I think his comments above on Tagore's 1924 China visit is the most authoritative on earth, and I have not seen any other comment more authoritative than it. In other words, Ji Xianlin has said the final word on the positive significance of Tagore's 1924 China visit. All those negative comments and even vilifications pale in value in front of these words of Ji Xianlin.

Based on the authoritative comment of Ji Xianlin, this essay contends that Tagore's 1924 China visit is a great event in the annals of the modern Chinese cultural development and the annals of Sino-Indian relationship. It created a huge impact on the development of culture, especially that of the new literature in China. These conclusions of mine may be divergent from the general view. I humbly and sincerely wish to have a discourse with Chinese and foreign experts in the spirit of the Chinese saying of "hurling away brick-bits to invite jewels throwing at me". Now I shall spell out my proposition in three sections: (1) taking a macro and positive standpoint to find the significance of Tagore's 1924 China visit from a civilizational perspective, (2) examining the misunderstandings and distortions in Chinese and foreign media regarding this visit, and (3) pondering upon deeply what Tagore said in China when we are now in a new era.

I

In 1924, on the eve of his departure — he and his entourage embarking on the sail from Calcutta to Hong Kong on their way to China — Tagore said to the press: "When the invitation from China reached me I felt that it was an invitation to India herself, and as her humble son, I must accept it." He further said: "I am hoping that our visit will reestablish the cultural and spiritual connections between China and India" (Hay 145). In his "leave taking" address in Shanghai on May 22, 1924, Tagore further elaborated this point in these words:

> I may tell you now that when my people heard I had received an invitation from China, there was great rejoicing and excitement amongst them. Most of you are aware that I have had, before this, other invitations from countries in the West, but this time the feeling of rejoicing was not restricted to that small circle which knows England, — it came from those who had no knowledge of England at all, and yet who were full of admiration at your generosity in inviting a man from the

> East, at a time when most people are infatuated with Western culture. They felt that this was a great opportunity for us to reopen the ancient channel of spiritual communication once again…. They thought it absolutely easy for me to let you, through the length and breadth of China, know how we in India have a love for you, and how we long to be the recipients of your love. (Das 73)

This observation of Tagore set his 1924 China visit in the sphere of modern intercourse between the two great civilizations of China and India. Viewing from Tagore's public and private statements in China in 1924 and the responses of Liang Qichao (1873-1929) and other important Chinese intellectuals who participated in the events of Tagore's visit, Tagore's China visit was truly a wide-ranging Sino-Indian civilizational dialogue, and a very significant event in the annals of Sino-Indian cultural intercourse.

From times immemorial there has been a salient feature in the Sino-Indian cultural intercourse. Let us trace it from the very beginning. First, there was Han Emperor Ming's dreaming of the golden Buddha, then the Han government's sending out a search team led by Cai Yin for fetching Buddhist missionaries to visit China, then Kasyapa Matanga and Dharmaraksa/Dharmaratna's arrival in China, then the Monastery of White Horses being constructed for the two eminent Indian monks to stay and translate the scriptures. This entire process has become a formula, making it a procedure of admiration-invitation-hospitality-learning on the part of China vis-à-vis India. After receiving Tagore in Beijing, Liang Qichao spoke at the Beijing Normal University to mobilize the Beijing intellectuals to attend the Tagore programmes. He alluded to historical events of Indian eminent monks being accorded warm receptions to China in yesteryears.

All the historical instances alluded to by Liang had followed the same procedure I have just mentioned. Liang also asked the intellectuals of Beijing to show the same historical warmth to Tagore. Tagore's sojourn in Beijing, in fact, his entire tour in China including Shanghai, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Jinan, Taiyuan and other places proceeded in the same traditional procedure, and the host-guest cordiality was as same as in the historical times, and the effect of cultural intercourse was as same as in the historical times. All in all, Tagore's China visit was an evidence of optimal hospitality on the part of the Chinese hosts. It was also one of his most exciting and moving experiences among Tagore's numerous foreign trips all over the world. It was an extremely lively and touching scene everywhere, and the fruitful event was very much in the traditional mode viewing from the prism of Sino-Indian cultural intercourse.

Taking a macro-view of the modern development of the world, first there was the rise of the West with a design to swallow up the globe, and then Asia has been on the rise and eclipsed the domination of the West. The West is like the setting sun, going along the downward curve. The contours of the 21st century becoming an "Asian century" are on the horizon. There have been three models within the rise of Asia: Japanese, Indian and Chinese. Japan's has been the example of "whole-hog westernization". After getting into the ranks of the Western powers, she started encroaching upon her Asian neighbours. In the wake of World War II she turned into a political ap-

pendage of the U. S. A., but became a sub-superpower economically. Her future prospect is not that great judging from her unwillingness to repent her historical mistakes and to change course thoroughly as well as her limitations of an island state, in addition to the constraints imposed on her by the U. S. A. Her model is that of both success and failure. Being mocked as a hitchhiking civilization, it won't have much success in future. [2]

We are thus left with the two eminent models of India and China. Apparently, these two models are poles apart. India has been the leader for the independence movement among the Afro-Asian colonial countries. After her independence, she has maintained intimate connections with the Western camp, but has been consciously developing her own cultural tradition, avoiding the Japanese course of completely groveling at the feet of the West. Though China was one time pursuing the course of "lean to one side" and stood opposed to the Western camp, she corrected this stance afterwards. Though China had excessively destroyed her cultural traditions during her modernization reforms, on the whole she has been embarking on the Indian road of maintaining her traditional characteristics without falling into the quagmire of the Japanese style of ludicrous blind imitation. When we examine the positive significance of Tagore's 1924 China visit, we must keep this point in mind.

Tagore's China visit, especially the Beijing celebrated Tagore's 63rd (the 64th according to Chinese tradition) birthday by all walks of life on May 8, was an outstanding event in international intercourse. The most significant programme in the birthday celebration was Liang Qichao's speech, translated into English by Hu Shi (1891 – 1962), presenting the Chinese name "Zhu Zhendan/Chu Chen-dan" to Tagore. This was also a great episode in the annals of Sino-Indian cultural intercourse deserves touting. For, not only was it brimming with the cordiality between two fraternal countries, but it had high value of the geo-civilizational spirit. Liang Qichao who was just 15 years younger than Tagore was an Indophile. He and Tagore had very vivid dialogue in Beijing. Professor Tan Chung has conducted some research on this vivid dialogue which deserves to be cited to reiterate the positive significance of Tagore's China visit.

According to Tan Chung, in the beginning of the 20th century some Chinese looked down upon the Indians, even calling them slaves who have lost their own country. However, among the Indians Tagore rose to win the Nobel Prize of the white Western world. This gave a tremendous moral boost to the Chinese who used to be bullied and insulted by the white "foreign devils". This was testified by Liang Qichao who went to Tianjin to welcome Tagore and escorted Tagore to Beijing by express train on April 23, and went to the Beijing Normal School to mobilize people to attend Tagore's lectures. In his mobilizing speech at the Normal School, Liang Qichao said: "I daresay we have never welcomed any foreigner so warming and sincerely [like the people of Beijing welcomed Tagore]" (Tan & Geng 22). In the same speech, Liang described China and India as fraternal countries. He said: "I say this not to flatter our guest, but from historical knowledge". He analyzed the millennial Chinese culture which was "extremely monotonous, extremely conservative". Fortunately China could have intimate intercourses with the "extremely great cultured na-

tion" India. Liang praised the Sino-Indian cultural interaction: "Even before many of the cultured nations began their activities the twins [of China and India], our two brothers, had already started studying the world problems, and had done a lot of service for humankind" (Tan & Geng 26). "When we had most intimate interactions, the little brother [China] was unfortunately young and na? ve, and had few gifts to offer to the old brother [India]. But we can never forget the valuable gift for us from our old brother [India]" (Tan & Geng 26). The "valuable gift" alluded to by Liang Qichao included the two great gifts of absolute liberty and absolute love which was Buddhism, in addition to twelve supplementary gifts: music, architecture, painting, sculpture, drama, poetry and novel, astronomy and calendar, medicine, alphabet, writing styles, education methods and social groups and organizations (Tan & Geng 25 – 26).

Tan Chung discovered that in all the three versions of *Rabindranath Tagore: Talks in China* published in India in 1924, 1925, and 1999, there is the "Introduction" by Liang Qichao (Liang Chi Chao) which is actually the English translation of the speech delivered by Liang at the Beijing Normal Institution, the transcript of which is now enshrined in volume 7 of *Collected Works of Liang Qichao* published in Beijing in 1999. The only difference is the English version in *Talks in China* has lost the vividness of the original. Let me cite what Tan Chung has discovered by picking up a paragraph from Liang's original speech and rendered it into English to show what is missing in the translation in the "Introduction".

"Introduction" in *Talks in China*:

> After a thousand years of separation during which period, however, we two continued to cherish thoughts of love for one another, this elder brother of ours has once more come to us animated with fraternal sentiments. Both of us bear lines of sorrow on our face, our hair is grey with age, we stare with a blank and vacant look as if we are just awakened from a dream; but, as we gaze on each other, what recollections and fond memories of our early youth rise in our mind, — of those days, when we shared our joys and sorrows together! Now that we have once more the happiness of embracing each other, we shall not allow ourselves to be separated again. (Das 23 – 4)

Tan Chung's translation of the original speech:

> Ha ha! Our old brother [India], 'affectionate and missing' for more than a thousand years, is now coming to call on his little brother [China]. We, the two brothers, have both gone through so many miseries that our hair has gone grey and when we gaze at each other after drying our tears we still seem to be sleeping and dreaming. The sight of our old brother suddenly brings to our minds all the bitterness we have gone through in our separate beds for all these years. Ah, ah, we must hold his [Tagore's] hands tight and not let go; we must hug him and kiss him again and again…. We must pour out the hot tears we have

> carried from our mother's womb and soak his huge lovely white beard into them. (Raganathan 63)

Liang's above-cited words are not only vivid, but came out from the heart, full of sentiments. The speech made by Liang while presenting the Chinese name "Zhu Zhendan/Chu Chen-tan" was equally warm with sentiments: "One day when we met, Tagore said to me: 'I don't know why, as soon as I arrived in China, I felt as though I was an Indian monk in a previous life, who stayed on a particular mountain, in a particular cave enjoying freedom.'" This was Tagore's motivation of asking for a Chinese name. After offering the name "Zhu Zhendan/Chu Chen-tan", Liang Qichao expressed his sincere wishes: "Today, our respected and beloved poet-saint from Heavenly India is celebrating his 64th birthday[3] in his beloved country 'Zhendan'/Cinasthana, with best mood and happiness. Let me join the names of both countries together and present a new name to him as 'Zhu Zhendan'. I hope our love for him will imprint this name in his heart. I hope through this person named Zhu Zhendan the old love between Indian and Chinese will be revived" (Raganathan 64). Both these wishes of Liang Qichao — (1) "Zhu Zhendan" imprinted in Tagore's heart, and (2) "Zhu Zhendan" Tagore revived the old love between Indian and Chinese — have been fulfilled. As Liang asserted that joining the names of the two countries of China and India would mean the revival of their fraternity, today Chinese and Indian scholars are promoting "Chindia" which amounts to the repetition of Liang's creation of "Zhu Zhendan".

Liang Qichao's exuberant enthusiasm in welcoming Tagore's China visit had a root cause in the consensus between Tagore's talks in China and the thought of Liang Qichao in the wake of his European tour (a disappointed mission of learning from the West on how to save China). A scholar observed later: "With the great thinker and literary master of Tagore's stature loudly advocating the values of the Eastern spiritual culture, Liang Qichao further fortified his resolution to seek truth from the native culture after his European tour, and he greatly invigorated his advocacy in this regard."[4]

The love-at-first-sight between Liang Qichao and Tagore failed to change the grave situation China was facing at that time. Walking down memory lane, we see a long process of an insular arrogant China with her drawbacks thoroughly exposed by the rise of Western civilizations. There was a complex background of the belated response to the challenge of Western civilizations on the part of the Chinese intellectual elite. During the reign of Emperors Kangxi and Qianlong, following the publications of a series of massive encyclopaedias and collections of reference books like *A Comprehensive Reference Book with Data from All Chinese Publications Past and Present*, popularly known as the *Kangxi Encyclopaedia*, *Kangxi Dictionary*, *A Comprehensive List of All Titles of the Holdings of the Four Imperial Libraries*, *Twenty Four Dynastic Annals*, *Ten Comprehensive Reference Series* etc. the Chinese culture reached its insular "golden era". At that time China had already fallen far behind the West in science and technology, yet the intellectual elites were intoxicated with self-admiration for the glories of Chinese culture. The two Opium Wars and a series of unequal trea-

ties impinging on China's prestige and sovereignty in their wake shocked some Chinese elites who finally woke up and endeavoured to revitalizing China. On the one hand, they realized the necessity to learn from the "advancement" of the West. First, they thought China was falling behind other countries only in gadgets, then, they realized that China was also backward in skills, and finally they further realized China's backwardness in sociopolitical structures. On the other hand, their realization of the corruption of China's ruling machine and their blaming the Manchu regime for its failings also made them deeply feel that the millennial cultural tradition was a heavy burden.

In the beginning of the 20th century, when the Chinese intellectual elite woke up to catch up with the progress of the times, the Western powers had already dominated Asia. The Chinese saw two models of the Asian nations' responses to the Western challenges: one was Japan, and another was India. A large number of Chinese revolutionaries, including Dr. Sun Yat-sen, turned their attention to Japan and went to Japan to learn her experiences. However, driven by narrow nationalism and militarism, Japan was developing in the direction of nibbling away Chinese territories which served to dampen Chinese passion for her. Meanwhile, two giants emerged from the Indian scene: Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore. In January 1924 when Sun Yat-sen delivered six lectures on "Nationalism", he elaborated the example of anti-British movement led by Gandhi in his fifth lecture. He highly praised Gandhi's achievement of uniting the Indian people into a national group contrasting with China's remaining as a span of scattered sands. Sun observed: "If the entire people [of China] could emulate the Indian people's non-cooperation and become a great national group by using religion as its foundation, we would not have feared any foreign country using military, economy and population to oppress us."[5]

Tagore's breaking the monopoly of the white Westerners to win the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913, and his subsequent lecture tours to the European countries and America as a non-white Indian having fans in the white Western high societies greatly encouraged the Chinese intellectuals who had been gravely repressed and insulted by the West. Tagore and Gandhi pointed out a direction for Chinese culture to revitalizing China by emulating the scientific progress of the West without servitude towards the Westerners. This was a valuable direction which China could neither get from the Western countries, nor from the Japan that was foolishly aping the West like the proverbial Lady Dongshi. Grasping such a direction has enabled China to rise in modern times from Sun Yat-sen to Chiang Kai-shek to Mao Zedong to Deng Xiaoping up to the contemporary Chinese leaders. This is a very important aspect of historical development for us to appreciate.

When Tagore was visiting China in 1924, the country and people of China were facing grave danger. China was in shambles, people were in dire poverty, warlords were doing dogfights. Most of the warlords cared not two hoots for the future of China, but keenly sought the protection of the imperialists in their fighting with each other for power and gains. The Communist Party of China (CPC) in its infancy had already succeeded in helping Dr. Sun Yat-sen reform the Kuomintang and adopt policies of uniting with Russia, uniting with communism and promoting the interests of

the peasants and workers, and establishing a united front with the Kuomintang and CPC as its nucleus. The high tide of a spectacular people's revolution was in the offing. In 1912, Sun Yat-sen said in his Oath of the President of the Republic of China: "It is the common wish of the people that the autocratic rule of the Manchu government be overthrown, that the Republic of China be strengthened, and that people's livelihood and welfare be pursued."[6] These words of Dr. Sun Yat-sen hit the nail on the head. It was true that "the common wish of the people" was concentrating on the earth-shaking political struggles. Culture is the superstructure that is the reflection from the life of the masses. The ideal that "people's livelihood and welfare be pursued" that was born in the wake of the establishment of the "Republic of China" was the manifestation of the Chinese cultural tradition absorbing inspirations from the Western civilizations. At this juncture a fierce polemic between the Eastern and Western cultural influences was taking place and deepening increasingly among the cultural and intellectual circles. Dr. Sun Yat-sen himself was a man inheriting Chinese cultural tradition who paid attention to absorbing the inspirations of the Western cultures. It was simultaneous to Tagore's China visit that Sun Yat-sen developed his "Three People's Principles" that was a concrete East-West synthesis which not only included the impact of the capitalist ideology, but also the Marxist ideology that he came in contact with from his CPC comrades.

In fact, at that time, the most serious expectant host to Tagore's China visit and eagerest to learn from this poet saint on how to save China among the Chinese ruling elite was Dr. Sun Yat-sen. As early as 1911, Sun said at Vancouver, Canada: "We must wake up all the countries of Asia, especially China and India" (Zhang Minqiu 72). Tan Chung in his article *Sun Yat-sen's Extraordinary Understanding of India* observes: (1) Sun Yat-sen was the first Chinese political leader to view the issue of revitalization of China from the "Asian" perspective; (2) when Sun Yat-sen talked about revitalizing China he was fond of using India as a reference point; (3) Sun yat-sen's view was that the sources of the power of Great Britain did not originate in the British isles, but in India, and without India Britain would become a "third class country of the world"; and (4) Sun Yat-sen reiterated that the Eastern civilizations were superior to the West (Zhang Minqiu 73 – 80).

Dr Sun Yat-sen had a special eye on India when he was in search of an ally in the East keeping the Chinese ethos in his mind. He observed: "The India-China intercourse began from the era of the Eastern Han Dynasty. Both interacted with each other peacefully and conducted scholarly and ideological exchanges. Both loved and admired each other, never had there been slight clash."[7] He always admired Tagore and wanted to be acquainted with him. In his opinion, Tagore had dedicated his entire life to social upheaval with art and literature as his weapon, advocating the revitalization of the traditional Indian culture, enhancing national self-pride, and promoting the national liberation movement. When Tagore was visiting China in April, 1924, Sun Yat-sen thought he was responding to the invitation to visit China with an aim of "promoting the rebirth of the traditional cultures of the East as well as the unity of Asian nations". In Sun's words, Tagore was opposed to "the complete reliance on European civilizations and whole-hog Westernization at the expense of one's own

special civilization and values", condemned the West's aggression, exploitation and devastation of China at will, and advocated "the coming together of the people of Japan, China and India under the banner of the rebirth of the oriental thought". [8] These premises of Tagore were in perfect agreement with Sun Yat-sen's reiteration on reinvigorating the national culture, morality and wisdom in order to revitalize the national spirit and restore the historical prestige of China. Therefore, though Sun Yat-sen thought he and Tagore differed on the means of struggle they had the common goal of striving for national independence. Before Tagore's departure for China, Sun Yat-sen sent a warm invitation letter to him. When Tagore was in Hong Kong on his way to China, Sun dispatched an emissary to call on Tagore, telling him that he was unwell and thus could not pay personal respect to Tagore. Sun also sent words that "The centre of China's life is in Beijing, the work of the Indian delegation should start from Beijing." This indicates that in Sun Yat-sen's opinion, Tagore's visit was helpful for the movement of rescuing China from going under, and he was sure that Tagore was able to help China to see correct road ahead and to come out of the crisis and peril. In the letter Sun wrote with his own hand to Tagore, he said: "I look forward to the privilege of personally receiving you when you arrive in China. To pay homage to scholars is our age old tradition. However, I shall be welcoming you not only as a writer who have created brilliance to Indian literature, but also an outstanding labourer whose diligent toiling has sowed the seeds for future welfare and spiritual achievement for the mankind." [9]

We can draw two conclusions from the above discourse. First, Sun Yat-sen and Tagore were comrades of sorts in many ways. Had the two met and a dialogue taken place between the two it might have had a certain impact on China's political development. Obviously, Sun had expected Tagore to spell out his views on how China and the Chinese people could be rescued, hence he had alluded to the "Indian delegates" coming to China to "start work". Second, as his hosts were in the eastern and northern China, Tagore's loyalty lay with them. Sun Yat-sen's base was at Guangzhou (Canton) which was branded as the "red capital". Tagore could not figure out Sun's "politics" at once, hence did not positively respond to Sun Yat-sen's invitation. Tagore's meeting with the deposed Manchu emperor, Puyi and some warlords in northern and eastern China but avoiding the "cradle of revolution" sent a wrong signal objectively speaking. This drew some criticisms from various quarters. In a word, it was regrettable that Tagore and Sun Yat-sen missed the opportunity for a dialogue.

Nevertheless, Tagore's not visiting the Kuomintang headquarters, Guangzhou (Canton), should not mean that the members of Kuomintang paid no attention to Tagore's China visit as well as his speeches in China. We find that later on when Tan Yun-shan (1898-1983) established the "Sino-Indian Cultural Society" in Nanjing and the Society helped Tagore build up "Cheena-Bhavana" in Tagore's Visva-Bharati in the 1930s, leaders of the Kuomintang like Chiang Kai-shek and Dai Jitao (Tai Chi-t'ao) etc. showed great admiration for Tagore and were eager to help. Still later, Dai Jitao and Chiang Kai-shek even paid personal visit to Visva-Bharati. All this proves that Sun Yat-sen's attaching great importance to Tagore's China visit was transposed to many members of Kuomintang.

Finally, there is an important fringe evidence to confirm the unique success of Tagore's 1924 China visit. C. F. Andrews, a close English friend of Tagore chanced to meet the poet in Hong Kong when Tagore was on his way home. He gathered a lot of information about Tagore's China visit both from the press and from Tagore himself and featured a story in the *Manchester Guardian* which was carried by *Bombay Daily Mail* on July 31, 1928. In Andrews' story, he wrote that Tagore had effected powerful influence on young Chinese intellectual who had "believed in armed force, as the only successful weapon in the modern world" and won them over. Andrews further revealed that these young Chinese intellectuals had "asked Mahatma Gandhi to come over, in succession to Tagore" which was, indeed, a convincing evidence "that the poet's message has truly carried weight" (Hay 305).

II

At the time Tagore visited China in 1924, there were two main trends among Chinese intellectuals: (1) a sort of "hundred schools contend" situation in their political thinking, even among Tagore's hosts there was no consensus in political opinions; (2) the intellectuals were much politicized, and politics tended to polarize, ill tolerating different views, making it like "not supporting me you must be my enemy". In such a situation it was but natural that Tagore's visit encountered some opposition. We know that the person who was the most vehement detractor of the visit was no other than the earliest Chinese scholar to commend Tagore in public who translated *Gitanjali* into Chinese and published it in 1915. He was Chen Duxiu (1879 – 1942). He and his leftist comrade Qu Qiubai (1899 – 1935) stood firmly against Tagore's lecturing in China and did two things: one was to write in the journals to comment adversely on what Tagore had said in China, and another was to send people to the venues of Tagore's lectures to distribute anti-Tagore leaflets.

It was in one of Tagore's lectures in Beijing that a leaflet got into the hands of Tagore. It was in Chinese and the Indian friends could not read it. They sought the help of Xu Zhimo and others. As an enthusiastic host of Tagore's visit, Xu was embarrassed and would not like to share what the leaflet actually said. However, the Indian friends obtained an English translation from a Japanese who was in China. Tagore was rather shocked and decided to cut short of his visit. Later, the gist of the leaflet was published in *Bengalee* at Calcutta which contained five points:

> 1. We have suffered much from the ancient Oriental civilizations, which include discrimination between the sexes, the worship of Emperors, oppression of the people, the feudal system, caste distinctions and the blind observance of ceremony. We cannot but oppose Dr. Tagore, who tries to uphold these useless and dead aspects of our civilization.
>
> 2. We feel a great shame when we come into contact with modern civilization. We should improve these conditions: Man-power farming, hand manufacturing, inefficient vehicles and ships, poor printing, poor roads and lack of sanitation. We oppose Dr Tagore so that we may reap the benefits of modern civilization.

> 3. The so-called spiritual civilization of the Orient is nothing more than civil wars, selfish occupations, hypocrisy, fraud, rapacity, vicious royalty, wicked filial respect and the contemptuous habit of foot-binding. How can we help but oppose these things which are so ruinous to us?
>
> 4. The Chinese have been indifferent towards encroachments by foreign powers and oppression by their own militarism, and their safety and lives are endangered. Dr Tagore would have nationality and politics abolished, replacing them with the consolation of one's soul. These are a refuge and a source of aesthetic joy for the sluggards, but not for us. We cannot but oppose Dr Tagore, who upholds these things which would shorten the life of our nation.
>
> 5. Dr Tagore shows a hearty sympathy with the Tung Shan Spiritual Society, a contemptuous and vicious organization in China which combines Taoism and Buddhism. Dr Tagore speaks of the 'Heavenly Kingdom', 'Almighty God' and 'soul'. If these could remove us from misery what would be the use of man's endeavour to reform the world? We oppose Dr Tagore, who tries to stunt the growth of self-determination and the struggle of the oppressed classes and races.[10]

Chen Duxiu (who used the pseudonym "Shi'an") and Qu Qiubai continually critiqued Tagore's lectures in their articles in the journals like *Chinese Youths*, *The Guide Weekly*, and *Verbal Threads* in the course of Tagore's visit. However, Tagore and his entourage might not have noticed them as these journals had very limited circulations. Tagore always had many detractors at home which did not perturb him much. He (as well as other Indian friends) was under the impression that it was the initiative of the Chinese youths to distribute leaflets at the venues of his lectures (actually it was Chen Duxiu and others who manipulated behind the scene), and this hurt the sentiments of Tagore who was extremely fond of the youths, juveniles and children.

Tagore did some candid and sincere talk in his farewell lecture in Shanghai. He said, "it is difficult [to bring different races close together] because life has become so conventional" (Das 75). He hinted that the Chinese youths would not have "the opportunity, nor perhaps even the curiosity to listen to" the great sages of the past because their numerous engagements in life, unessential but had to be there "to fill up so many gaps". He further said:

> Let me confess this fact, that I have my faith in higher ideals. I believe that through them we can best serve the higher purposes of life. At the same time, I have a great feeling of delicacy in giving utterance to them, because of certain modern obstacles which make it almost a disreputable thing to be frank and free in the expression of ideas. ((Das 76)

Tagore even forced himself to repent while admitting his inner sorrow that a perfect visit had turned out to be unpleasant in the minds of many people. He said:

> My stay here has been made pleasant, beautiful, and I am happy. But in the depth of my heart there is a pain, — I have not been serious enough. I have had no opportunity to be intensely, desperately earnest about your most serious problems. I have been pleasant, nice, superficial, when I ought to have come as one making penance, to take up the heart of life, to prove that I was sincere, not merely literary and poetical. (Das 75 – 6)

Chen Duxiu and Qu Qiubai criticized Tagore due to their fear that Tagore's thought might hamper the leftist mobilization of Chinese youths to break up with the tradition and throw themselves into the revolutionary cause. They made no personal attack on Tagore. Even in the leaflet that we have cited above, its sharp denouncement was written in between repeated polite references to "Dr Tagore". The worst indecorous critique among Chinese scholars was Lin Yutang (1895 – 1976) who penned the essay *On Tagore's Political Thought*. In this essay, Lin resorted to dark innuendo to call Tagore "a slave whose own country was dead", and condemned Tagore for his audacity to brag about how to save the country spiritually on the soil of China that had not yet gone under. Lin commented condescendingly: "When one lives in a situation that his country is dead, he would not feel very comfortable spiritually. This results in a kind of reaction of figuring out how to revitalize the country's glories. They have tried all sorts of assassination, revolution, or reformation of the constitution; those who are fed up have resorted to the silliest means namely taking refuge in spirituality."[11] Lin saw the fundamental difference between Tagore's patriotism and Goethe's patriotism. Lin asserted that Tagore's advocacy of "spiritual restoration", "inner purity", "harmony with universe" and "seeing god everywhere" were all rubbish ideas, and even commented sarcastically: "when Tagore succeeds in his cultivation of the *kungfu* of 'seeing god everywhere' (the quickest would take a thousand years), God knows what India would have been by then." Lin commented viciously: "Tagore who enjoyed great reputation and favourable treatment today find himself inconvenient in advocating independence and opposing the British government. However, he has to find some way to get out of his predicament. Hence he unconsciously advocates the most convenient spiritual movement which does harm to nobody." He tried to bring down Tagore's noble mind to the debased level of his own meanness to categorize Tagore's ideas as "a discourse of consciousness assassination", and came out with a foul-mouthed utterance, like the proverbial wicked woman cursing everybody on the street, that Tagore's "discourse of spiritual restoration" actually "bears the stench of spiritual self amusement".[12]

Professor Tan Chung told us a story. When he was teaching in Delhi University in the 1960s he invited colleagues home for dinner. Once, in the after-dinner gossip, Professor Rubi Dasgupta, "Tagore Professor" and the Dean of Arts Faculty, told a joke. He said when people asked Lin Yutang what he was doing in the U. S. A., Lin's reply was: "I am selling *My Country and My People*!"[13] This was a well-known international joke that penetratingly critiqued Lin Yutang's academic mental servitude in his admiration of the West. Yet, when it was told through the mouth of an Indian friend, especially an expert on Tagore it assumed great significance. Tagore was

so deeply imbued in the Western civilizations that Lin Yutang fell far behind. However, Tagore disliked most such people like Lin Yutang who had no national self respect and were bent on flattering the Westerners. It was, indeed, the servitude of Lin Yutang that a man of his excellent talent inspired little respect in China. Tagore was so upright and overboard with dignified speech and well-meaning opinions during his times, and all what he said were verbal gems and golden truth while Lin Yutang featured himself as a narrow-minded fellow devoid of the deportment of Chinese civilization. His accusing Tagore's ideas of bearing "the stench of spiritual self amusement" reminds us the "Pseudo-Foreign Devil" in the fiction *The True Story of Ah Q* who would not allow Ah Q to rise in revolution. The strength of the "Pseudo-Foreign Devil" lies in his proverbial cleverness of the fox taking advantage of the fierce image of the tiger. He situated himself behind the tail of the "Foreign Devil" — the aggressor against China — and gesticulated at the "country bumpkins" of China and shouted: "You bear the stench!" Today, it is for the scholarly and cultural circles to come to the defence of Tagore and turn the table on Lin Yutang. Those whose ideas bear the stench were not the noble souls like Tagore, but the intellectuals like Lin Yutang who admired the West with mental servitude. Lin Yutang's abusive description of Tagore as the "pitiable person whose country is dead" showed his cloven hoof. Had Tagore been a Briton or American Lin Yutang would not have resorted to the above cited vicious comments. He typified the prejudice on India's modern development on the part of a portion of Chinese intellectuals.

Nevertheless, Lin Yutang's disrespect to Tagore was the lone instance among the expansive Chinese intellectuals, thus should not deserve too much attention from us. On the whole, it was just like what Tagore had said himself "My stay here has been made pleasant, beautiful, and I am happy." — China tried her level best to be a good host while Tagore enjoyed VIP treatment. In his remaining days of life during his 80th birthday, Tagore was too weak to hold the pen when emotion surged within him, making him nostalgic for the celebration for his 63rd birthday in Beijing, and he dictated the poem below:

In the vessel of my birthdays
Sacred waters from many pilgrimages
Have I gathered, this I remember.
Once I went to the land of China,
Those whom I had not met
Put the mark of friendship on my forehead,
Calling me their own.
The garb of a stranger slipped from me unknowing,
The inner man appeared who is eternal,
Revealing a joyous relationship, unforeseen.
A Chinese name I took, dressed in Chinese clothes.
This I know in my mind:
Wherever I find my friend, there I am born anew.

Life's wonder he brings. [14]

In 1924, after returning from China to India, Tagore sorted out his China lectures and published it. He had not done anything like this after visiting other foreign countries. It shows the special importance he had attached to this visit. He really thought it a great event in his life. The book *Talks in China* was brought out in 1924 by Arunoday Art Press through the management of S. K. Bose. But, very soon, the copies of the book were withdrawn from the book stores. In less than a year, a substantially revised version of the book was published in 1925 by one of the publishers of Tagore, Karunabindu Biswas (Das 7). With these two versions, in addition to the brief reminiscences of Leonard Elmhirst, kalidas Nag, and Kshitimohan Sen[15] all of whom were in the entourage of Tagore's China visit, the event drew a satisfactory conclusion for the time being. However, a young American scholar, Stephen Hay, undertook an exhaustive research and collected data from China, Japan and India in the 1960s, and bought out the book, *Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and His Critics in Japan, China, and India* (by Harvard University Press) in 1970. Being rich in information the book received tremendous attention in Indian academic circles, and provided ammunition for some Indians for criticizing Tagore. Based on his conviction in "clash of civilizations", Hay played up the Chinese voices that were critical of Tagore's visit. This stimulated the anti-China opinions in India. In 1984, there was a seminar in Shimla under the auspices of the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies. The "Tagore Professor" of Delhi University, Sisir Kumar Das, delivered the keynote address, Tan Chung who was Professor of Chinese in Jawaharlal Nehru University presented his paper on Tagore's China visit, titled "The Rabindranath Thunder of Oriental Dawn: A Sino-Indian Perspective of Tagore". In his paper, Tan Chung hailed Tagore's China visit as an important historical event. He presented to the seminar the warm welcome of China for Tagore, and cited massive Chinese source materials to criticize Stephen Hay for distorting history. After the seminar, Das and Tan Chung, along with another Indian expert on comparative literature, planned to bring out an English book on "Tagore and China". Finally, while Das and Tan Chung accomplished their tasks, the other scholar failed to deliver, and the book aborted.

With the help of Tan Chung and his sister, Tan Wen[16], Das and Tan Wen jointly brought out a book in *Bengali*, *Bitarkita Atithi* (*The Controversial Guest*) published at Calcutta in 1985, and Das published his portion of work for the abortive book first in *China Report*, Delhi, and then, in the book, *Across the Himalayan Gap* edited by Tan Chung in 1998 (published by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi). Later, Das included it in the book he edited, *Rabindranath Tagore: Talks in China*. These efforts helped eliminate the misunderstandings about Tagore's China visit among the Indian friends to a certain extent. However, the great significance of this China visit of Tagore would become the consensus of the vast academia only if Chinese and foreign scholars work with tenacious efforts. Only thinking of "reviewing Tagore's influence on Chinese literature and the traditional base that the Chinese nation could absorb the influence of Tagore to seriously summarize the experiences and lessons of the emulation of Tagore on the part of Chinese literature as well

as people's acceptance of Tagore when he was in China" is not the appropriate mood for the Chinese academia to grasp the significance of Tagore's China visit(Zhang Yu 287). We should view the topic from multiple angles of Sino-Indian friendship and world peace, more objectively and deeply embark on the research on "The significance of Tagore's China visit" so that we can contribute to the elimination of the "Himalayan gap" between China and India.

III

On May 12, 1924, Xu Zhimo gave a talk at the Zhenguang Theatre in Beijing and said that after landing at Shanghai on April 12, Tagore "had given lectures and talked at smaller gatherings for 30 – 40 times at least" (Xu 442). By that time, Tagore had already decided to cut short of his visit (leaving Beijing two days after, and bidding farewell to China from Shanghai two weeks after), and there won't be too many talks afterwards. During these "30 – 40 talks at least", Tagore generally was well prepared, carrying a script or outline but very frequently departing from it and talking off the cuff. Xu Zhimo was his interpreter at most of, if not all the talks. His hand notes would have been the most comprehensive source materials of Tagore's talks in China. Unfortunately, after he died of an air crash in 1931, his wife, Lu Xiaoman did not take care of his manuscripts. Besides the four talks (Tagore's first talk at Shanghai on April 13, his talk at Hangzhou a few days later, his talk at the Tsinghua Institution on May 1st, and his farewell talk at Shanghai on May 22) Xu had published in the Chinese press, all others are not extant. What a pity! In 1999, "Tagore Professor" of Delhi University, renowned scholar of Bengali literature, Sisir Kumar Das, brought out a new book at the behest of Visva-Bharati, *Rabindranath Tagore: Talks in China* (Calcutta: Visva-Bharati Rabindra-Bhavana publication) which combined the two published versions during Tagore's time into one volume. This book has now become the most comprehensive and valuable primordial data.

Here, I wish to say something in passing. Translation, especially oral interpretation, is rather difficult to be absolutely perfect, deficiencies are unavoidable. Though Xu Zhimo's English was excellent, to fluently convey to the audience through Chinese Tagore's lofty ideas and profound emotions poetically expressed by him would be a great challenge. When we compare Xu Zhimo's translation with the original text of Tagore's talks as provided in the volume of Professor Das, we find the deficiencies. A few examples are given below.

In his very weighty lecture delivered at the Tsinghua Institution on May 1, Tagore said:

> My young friends, I gaze at your faces, beaming with intelligence and eager interest across the distance of age…. I envy you. When I was a boy, in the dusk of the waning night, we did not fully know to what a great age we had been born …. What a delight it may be for you, and what a responsibility, this belonging to a period which is one of the greatest in the whole history of man! We realize the greatness of this age dimly, in the light of the glowing fire of pain, in the suffering that has come upon us, a suffering that is world-wide; we do not even know

fully what form it is going to take. (Das 62)

There is profound meaning in this short observation. He came from an India that was ruled by British colonialism, while many countries in the world, including China, were suffering similar pain. However, from the faces of the students of Tsinghua Institution he saw the vibrant young generation of China who were sensitive to the coming of the new era, contrasting with the bewilderment in which he spent his own boyhood. His poetic language was to remind the Chinese youths to see clearly the new era and realize their own responsibilities.

I now render Xu Zhimo's translation of this Tagore observation into English which sounds thus:

> My young friends, I look at your young faces, beaming with intelligence and sincere interest, yet there is a gap of age between us…. I envy you. When I was a boy, that time there was no dawn in the East, and the universe was dark. We did not fully realize that we had been born in a great period…. You can be proud of yourself, but also should know of your responsibilities. You are now living in one of the greatest period of the history of man. We dimly distinguish the greatness of our times through the fire of our sorrow and pain. The pain is universal, and we don't know fully the shape of our future. (Xu Zhimo 7, 34)

We can say that the main meaning of Tagore has been conveyed by this translation, but the power of agitation of Tagore was somewhat lost. It was like rendering a good poem banally.

The Chinese translation of this lecture was the revised version that Xu Zhimo completed at Mount Lushan on July 26 and published later, not what Xu spoke out during the on-the-spot interpretation which might be even worse. According to Xu's revised version, Tagore seems to have said something like this which does seem very unlikely to be said by the poet saint:

> All things having perfect quality and behaviour belong to humanity. A beautiful thing cannot be monopolized by someone, cannot be easily blocked. That is desecration. Supposing you have utilized your instinct for beauty, arranging things on the ground, creating everything, this is a kindness towards distant guest. Even if I am a stranger, I can find my homeland and comfort in the heart of beauty. (Xu Zhimo 7, 39)

We find it difficult to understand what this means, the on-the-spot interpretation of Xu Zhimo would have been even more difficult to grasp. The objective observer would have thought Tagore was indulging in scholastic discourse at the Tsinghua Institution, totally irrelevant to the world situation China was facing at that time. This is absolutely untrue. According to Tagore's manuscript, he has said these words to the Chinese youths:

> Things that possess this quality of perfection belong to all humanity. Being beautiful they cannot be secured within closed doors, — that is a desecration which providence does not permit. If you have been successful in creating beauty, that in itself is hospitality, and I, a stranger, can find my home here in the heart of beauty. (Das 66)

These words have summarized what he dwelt upon at length that the Chinese culture laid emphasis on the material life while maintaining the spiritual beauty. Tagore used the wording "secured within closed doors". By the word "secured" he meant locked in the safe to prevent it from being stolen. He was insinuating at the Western civilization treating private property as the sacred cow, hence it was impossible for all humanity to enjoy together. By saying "I, a stranger, can find my home here in the heart of beauty," Tagore also fully reiterated the commonality between the Chinese and Indian civilizations. Such profound meaning has not been brought out by Xu Zhimo's translation.

On August 19, Xu Zhimo completed translating Tagore's speech at Hangzhou more than three months earlier, and published it in the supplementary of *Beijing Daily*. There are a number of places that we don't find the translation happy. For example, Tagore thought his audience won't expect "any message" from him, which is rendered by Xu Zhimo as "to bring any news to you". Tagore said that "the great task of India in the past" was "building paths over obstacles." Xu Zhimo translated as "The great cause of India in history was to open obstacles, building the paths." Tagore said: "Men, at their highest, are pathmakers," Xu Zhimo translated it as "We must first remember these road-makers". Tagore said: "I have come to ask you to re-open the channel of communication which I hope is still there; for though overgrown with weeds of oblivion its lines can still be traced." Xu Zhimo translated it as "I have come to ask you to channel again that waterway of emotional interaction, I hope we can find its original trace though it is covered with creepers of time" (Das, 49, 50; Xu Zhimo 7, 72,73). Though the last sentence correctly convey the meaning, it sounds rather odd.

The discourse above is not meant to find fault from Xu Zhimo's translation, but avail of this opportunity to discover the profound substance in Tagore's lectures in China, so that all of us are encouraged to embark on an in-depth study of the manuscript of Tagore's lectures, digest word by word, thus all the more thoroughly appreciate the positive significance of Tagore's China visit. I want to spell this out from three viewpoints. The first point is that among all famous people of the modern world, Tagore was the most enthusiastic in advocating Sino-Indian fraternity. Everywhere he went inside China he made the Chinese people feel that India was their neighbourly country and sincere friend. Second, Tagore was the first foreign visiting scholar in China to compare the merits and demerits of the Eastern and Western civilizations from the height of geo-civilizational paradigm. He himself was deeply imbued with the Western civilizations, and was in favour of emulating the West and realizing modernization. However, he saw clearly the importance of the spiritual culture of the East and earnestly advise the Chinese not to ape the West. Third, Tagore was a patriotic

poet. When he was in China, he not only strongly revealed his ardent love for India, but also expressed his warm affection for China and wished the Chinese patriots success in their endeavours for constructing a rich and strong country and people.

Let us first discuss the first viewpoint. Tagore said in 1937 while inaugurating Visva-Bharati Cheena-Bhavana:

> This is, indeed, a great day for me, a day long looked for, when I should be able to redeem, on behalf of our people, an ancient pledge implicit in our past, the pledge to maintain the intercourse of culture and friendship between our people and the people of China, an intercourse whose foundations were laid eighteen hundred years back by our ancestors with infinite patience and sacrifice. (Tan Chung 177)

From these words, we see how Tagore cherished the mission of restoring the two-millennial geo-civilizational intercourse between India and China which he had repeatedly referred to while delivering his lectures in China in 1924. "This was the great task of India in the past, the task of building paths over obstacles," Tagore told Chinese students at Hangzhou (Das, 49). Tagore was even more enthusiastic about the restoration of the millennial Sino-Indian friendship in his first lecture at Shanghai:

> I hope that some great dreamer will spring from among you and preach a message of love and, therewith overcoming all differences bridge the chasm of passions which has been widening for ages…. The time is at hand when we shall once again be proud to belong to a continent which produces the light and radiates through the storm-clouds of trouble and illuminates the path of life. (Das 48)

Tagore made the observation below in another China lecture which was a special discourse on "*satyam*":

> I have no doubt in my own mind that in the East our principal characteristic is not to set too high a price upon success through gaining advantage, but upon self-realisation through fulfilling our dharma, our ideals. Let the awakening of the East impel us consciously to discover the essential and the universal meaning of our own civilisation, to remove the debris from its path, to rescue it from the bondage of stagnation that produces impurities, to make it a great channel of communication between all human races. (Das 99)

Though only the "East" is mentioned in this observation, Tagore eyed on "all human races" which, obviously included the West, and Tagore's reference to achieving "success through gaining advantage" was clearly the identification of the Western ethos as well as its influence on the westernized non-Western world. In this observation, Tagore linked up India and China as well as "*dharma*" — the umbilical cord of the twin civilizations of India and China — in his appeal for the creation of a new geo-civilizational paradigm.

In Tagore's 1937 speech, he further observed: "The Hall [Cheena-Bhavana] which is to be opened today will serve both as the nucleus and as a symbol of that larger understanding that is to grow with time. Here students and scholars will come from China and live as part of ourselves, sharing our life and letting us share theirs, and by offering their labours in a common cause, help in slowly re-building that great course of fruitful contact between our peoples, that has been interrupted for ten centuries. For this Visva-Bharati is, and will, I hope, remain a meeting place for individuals from all countries, east or west, who believe in the unity of mankind and are prepared to suffer for their faith" (Tan 177).

All this shows that Tagore was not only an idealist, but paid great attention on the realization of idealism. He named the institution he created in 1921 as "Visva-Bharati" (meaning "where the whole world meets in one nest"), and developed the Sino-Indian intercourse as a break through. The first foreign institution on the campus of Visva-Bharati was "Cheena-Bhavana," and the first flock of foreign birds in Tagore's "world nest" was the Chinese community — scholars and their families led by Tan Yun-shan (1898 – 1983). This became the manifestation of the entire ideal of Tagore, and Tagore's 1924 China visit was an important step of this entire course.

Coming to the second point, before going to China Tagore had already lectured in many countries in the world. What he had lectured was the merits and demerits of the Eastern and Western civilizations which Tagore had had perceptual experiences. As early as 1916, when Tagore lectured at Tokyo Imperial University, he said: "The lamp of ancient Greece is extinct in the land where it was first lighted…. But the civilization, whose basis is society and the spiritual ideal of man, is still a living thing in China and India" (Hay 64). In 1924, Tagore said in one of his lectures in Beijing: "Your civilization has been nurtured in its social life upon faith in the soul. You are the most long-lived race, because you have had centuries of wisdom nourished by your faith in goodness, not in mere strength" (Das 55).

There is no gainsaying that in the mind of Tagore there was immortality of the two great spiritual civilizations of China and India while the cultural holy lands of ancient Babylonia, Egypt, Greece and Rome had been reduced to ruins. Tagore was one of the few famous people in modern history who admired the Chinese and Indian civilizations like a pilgrim. In China, Tagore drew from the perceptual experiences he realized that countries like India and China that had age-old civilizations should not undergo "whole-hog westernization", instead of developing self-confidence in their own civilizational traditions and realizing deeply the positive functions of the Eastern civilizations in the making of a future world. He said in a lecture in Beijing:

> We must rise from our stupor, and prove that we are not beggars. This is our responsibility. Search in your own homes for things that are of underlying worth. Then you will be saved and will be able to save humanity. Some of us, of the East, think that we should copy and imitate the West. I do not believe in it. What the West has produced is for the West, being native to it. But we of the East cannot borrow the Western mind nor the Western temperament. We want to find our own birth right. The West is becoming demoralized through being the

> exploiter, through tasting of the fruits of exploitation. We must fight with our faith in the moral and spiritual power of men. We of the East have never reverenced death-dealing generals, nor lie-dealing diplomats, but spiritual leaders. Through them we shall be saved, or not at all. Physical power is not the strongest in the end. That power destroys itself. Machine guns and bomb-dropping aeroplanes crush living men under them, and the West is sinking to its dust. We are not going to follow the West in competition, in selfishness, in brutality. (Das 53 – 4)

We have just alluded to Tagore's "we are not beggars" (meaning "we are not poor both materially and spiritually, and would not become solicitant towards the Western civilization") and "We cannot borrow the Western mind nor the Western temperament. We want to find our own birthright." These are absolutely adages worthy of digestion on the part of Chinese intellectual elite so that they can undertake in-depth self-scrutiny. In his first lecture in Beijing, Tagore said with even more clarity: "My warning is, that those who would have you rely on material force to make a strong nation, do not know history, or understand civilization either. Reliance on power is the characteristic of barbarism; nations that trusted to it have already been destroyed or have remained barbarous" (Das 55). He further said: "Many will point to the weakness of China and India and tell you that thrown, as we are, among these strong and progressive peoples, it is necessary to emphasize power and progress in order to avoid destruction…. We have seen victory won by diplomacy and brute force, but there are signs in the civilizations founded on diplomatic lies and blind material strength that even now their doom is on them. Lies do prosper for a while; but the true life dies at the root" (Das 56).

Tagore hit the nail on its head by alluding to emphasize power and progress in order to avoid destruction. Such a conviction was what the Japan of Meiji Restoration had taught to the Chinese patriots, an idea which is still deeply rooted in Chinese political thought. We see, today, the absolute truth of what Tagore has said that the "blind material strength" is the cause of self-destruction. The Great British Empire was thus destroyed, Hitler's Germany was thus destroyed, and the militarists' Japan was thus destroyed. Today, we see Tagore's prophecy of "their doom is on them" auguring ill for post-Bush, even post-Obama America.

Tagore admired the modernization of Japan. He was hoping that as a part of the great Eastern cultural tradition, Japan would lead Asia in modernization and in providing an alternative developmental model from the dominating materialistic West. He said in Japan in 1916:

> Asia now feels that she must prove her life by producing living work, she must not lie passively dormant, or feebly imitate the West, in the infatuation of fear or flattery. For this we offer our thanks to this Land of the Rising Sun and solemnly ask her to remember that she has the mission of the East to fulfil. She must infuse the sap of a fuller humanity into the heart of modern civilization. (Hay 65)

> Tagore also said in the same trip to Japan that "there are two currents in Japan: the old and the new. I sincerely hope that the Japanese people will not forget the old Japan. The new Japan is only an imitation of the West. This will ruin Japan. Now I believe that Japanese civilization is harmonizing the West and the East. I hope that you will carry the light of this glorious Oriental civilization to the West" (Hay 66).

Afterwards, Tagore was greatly disappointed about the developments of the events. In 1937, Japan launched a wanton aggression on China which triggered the Anti-Japanese War. The militarists' Japanese government wished to utilize Tagore's Japanese friends to lob anti-China propaganda on Tagore but Tagore vehemently rebuked them. In 1938, Tagore had two rounds of open correspondence with famous Japanese poet, Yone Noguchi, which helped Indian and international media see clearly Japan's getting onto the path of self-destruction by behaving like the proverbial Lady Dongshi stupidly copying others' examples. In Tagore's first letter dated September 1, Tagore said: "your letter has hurt me to the depths of my being…. Faced by the borrowed science of Japanese militarism which is crudely western in character, China's stand reveals an inherently superior moral stature" (Tan Chung 210). In his second letter to Noguchi, Tagore said: "I suffer intensely not only because of the reports of the Chinese suffering batter against my heart, but because I can no longer point out with pride the example of a great Japan" (Tan Chung 214). All this is not only Tagore's total disappointment with Japan, but also the poet's most severe condemnation couched with sophisticated nuance on Japan's discarding the tradition of Eastern civilizations to blindly ape the West.

In the last couple of centuries, Japan has been the unity of opposites without its clearly understanding it. On the one hand, it is like what Tagore described "feebly imitate the West, in the infatuation of fear or flattery" and tasted its sweetness, even Tagore had appreciated it. On the other hand, it has taken over all the bad points of the Western civilization and does it in high spirit. Tagore saw this peril clearly and observed: "The new Japan is only an imitation of the West. This will ruin Japan." In 1921, Tagore wrote to C. F. Andrews: "To me humanity is rich and large and many-sided. Therefore I feel deeply hurt when I find that, for some material gain, man's personality is mutilated in the Western world and he is reduced to a machine" (Uma 202). In his speech at Tokyo Imperial University in 1916, Tagore warned Japan against "imitating the West". He said: "It is like dressing our skeleton with another man's skin, giving rise to eternal feuds between the skin and the bone at every movement…You can borrow knowledge from others, but you cannot borrow temperament" (Uma 242).

In 1916, Tagore said in Japan "you cannot borrow temperament", but the Japanese turned a deaf ear to it. The result was Japan's creating its self-destruction. In 1924, Tagore said again in Beijing: "we of the East cannot borrow the Western mind nor the Western temperament", and the Chinese did not turn a deaf ear to Tagore's most sincerely advice. China did not follow the beaten track of Japan. People should thank Tagore for his advice. Earlier I have alluded to Tagore's pointing out that there

was a proposition among the Asians about "emphasize power and progress in order to avoid destruction". That the Japanese were pushed towards self-destruction by this proposition is an indisputable fact. However, the Chinese have not experienced the bitter lessons of the Japanese, hence are not deeply convinced of the harm of this proposition. In the past, China had no opportunity to pursue power. Now, their opportunities in doing so are increasing more and more, hence we hear louder and louder the advocacy of "emphasize power and progress in order to avoid destruction". This is a dangerous trend. We must carefully study the valuable advice of Tagore of 1924 again and pay attention to infuse the sap of the excellent tradition of Chinese civilization.

About the third point, we have to see first of all the fact that the national anthem of two different countries today — India and Bangladesh — are poems composed by Tagore and songs from the Rabindra sangit (Tagore himself participated in the work of music composition and opera direction). A single poet giving birth to two national anthems is an unprecedented feat in human cultural history. Tagore passed away in 1941. The Republic of India born in 1950 adopted *Tagore's Janaganamana* (*Thou Art the Ruler of the Minds of All People*) as its national anthem. The People's Republic of Bangladesh born in 1972 adopted Tagore's *Amar Sonar Bangla* (*Our Golden Bangla*) as its national anthem. These are vivid examples of the geo-civilizational paradigm with profound significance, eternalizing Tagore's ardent love for his own land through posterity in the hearts of Indians and Bagladeshis and to a certain extent neutralizing the crime committed by the British colonialism in mutilating the solidarity of the people of the Indian subcontinent. We can thus conclude that the great and noble patriotism of Tagore is contesting against the narrow-minded geopolitical paradigm forever.

Such great and noble patriotic sentiments of Tagore permeate in the two anthologies, *Gitanjali* and *The Crescent Moon: Child poems*, that were so familiar to Chinese readers. In "Baby's Way" in *The Crescent Moon* Tagore rhymed:

> Baby was so free from every tie in the land of the tiny crescent moon.
> It was not for nothing he gave up his freedom.
> He knows that there is room for endless joy in mother's little corner of a heart, and it is sweeter far than liberty to be caught and pressed in her dear arms.
> Baby never knew how to cry. He dwelt in the land of perfect bliss.[17]

These poetic words view the providence and sentimental attachment between an individual and his/her native land from a modern cultural perspective. Tagore likened the individual to a baby and his/her native land to the mother's bosom. The individual, like the baby, is born "free from every tie", i.e., from the attachment of the native land. This, in fact, is the individual attitude towards his/her native land and motherland in many cases in the Western world. However, Tagore felt that the individual living in the native land was like the baby willing to sacrifice his freedom and "to be caught and pressed in the dear arms" of the mother — the native land. This was because living in the happy state of love is far more enjoyable and enriched than indi-

vidual freedom.

Baby never knew how to cry. This is a modern scientific theory: Baby's "crying" is only a kind of exercise, for the baby does not know sadness. Tagore transposed this scientific theory into the reiteration that love for one's own native land is an individual instinct, and is the manifestation of positive optimism. If every Chinese intellectual elite carefully digests these words of the "Baby's Way" poem and deeply understands their philosophical logic, it will help augmenting patriotism.

Gitanjali that fetched Tagore the Nobel Prize of literature is in every word and every line the crystallization of Indian philosophical thought. The various symbols for God in the anthology do not reflect any idol worship, but manifest the profound affection for the native land, the tradition, the faith and the civilization. It is a manifesto of patriotism with high IQ. That is why some Indian institutions adopts *Gitanjali* as the "Bible" of its training programmes. The most famous stanza is *Gitanjali* (35), which says:

> Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
> Where knowledge is free;
> Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
> Where words come out from the depth of truth;
> Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfect;
> Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
> Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action —
> Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake. [18]

Lu Xun (1881 – 1936) published an article titled *Wanton condemnation and superlative eulogy* in the supplementary of *Shanghai Daily* in 1933 in which he observed: "About the modern people serving the ancient times, I am reminded Tagore's visit to China, and the setting up of a stage for him to lecture. People provided him with a harp, burnt incense. He was franked by Lin Juemin on the left and Xu Zhimo on the right, both donned the Indian cap. Poet Xu started introducing: 'Ai, *jiligulu*, white clouds and clean breeze, the silver plate…. Dong!' talking like a living fairy. In this way our youths on earth got disappointed and departed. How can the laymen not depart from the fairies! However, I read his [Tagore's] essay on the Soviet Union in which he described himself as 'I am an Indian under the British rule', he knew himself well. Perhaps, if our poets and others had not made him a living fairy he would not have been so confused, and the [Chinese] youths would not have been so alienated. What a bad luck now!" [19] Lu Xun described in another place that Tagore was totally confused by the Chinese who donned the Indian caps and ultimately left [China] bewildered. These two observations reflect that Lu Xun did not take Tagore's China visit that serious, if not opposed to it. However, Lu Xun could not but concede that in those days when the whole world was under the repression and domination of the West, the Chinese had no say, entire Asia had no say with the lone exception of

Tagore. When Tagore lectured in Europe and America as well as Japan, all the immensely proud government officials, king's men and aristocrats and upper class intellectual elites of the world eulogized him. This was in sharp contrast with the cold reception meted out to outstanding Chinese elites like Liang Qichao and Cai Yuanpei (1868 – 1940) in Europe. Lu Xun lectured in Hong Kong in February 1927 and his talk was titled *ChinaThat Is Mute*. He said: "Let us see which are the mute nations. Can we hear the voice of Egypt? Can we hear the voice of Annam and Korea? Except Tagore what other voice of India can we hear?"[20]

The observations of Lu Xun cited above also reflect the fear of the Chinese leftists at that time that the hosts of Tagore (Lu Xun named Lin Juemin and Xu Zhimo) intended to utilize Tagore's China visit to propagate the rightists' ideology and stem the development of the leftist movement. Just as Daiying observed: "Tagore should not have been the target of vilification, but as there was real possibility of Tagore's being utilized by others, we cannot but offer a little critique to his thought."[21] This critique is objective. It combines with the observations of Lu Xun cited above to reflect the involvement of Tagore's visit in the internal political polemics of China. The critics of Tagore's China visit were motivated by their concerns for the future of Chinese revolution and the will power of the Chinese youths. Their offering positive suggestions and criticisms, and steadfastly leading the people onto the path of revolution are not wrong. But, they did not do it properly. Especially improper was that some individuals attacked Tagore openly in the press, even resorting to the distribution of leaflets showing disrespect to Tagore. This was discourteous towards the great emissary who was Tagore and who went to China in search of the traditional friendship between China and India for which he had suffered toiling and fatigue. Still, Tagore with his broadmindedness treated it as a friendly gesture. He thought that those who were opposed to him had paid great attention to him hence having overacted. Before Tagore's generous toleration we must all the more censure the impropriety of our countrymen.

Among various comments the most appropriate were those of Zhou Zuoren (1885 – 1967) and Jianhu which, nevertheless, were not paid much attention to by the media. In his article *Damage of the Adults and Others*, Zhou Zuoren made himself clear that he was neither with Tagore's fans nor with his detractors, but was viewing the polemic from a neutral standpoint. In the essay he observed: "I feel people should welcome [Tagore] as his hosts, not utilizing the image of the venerable sir as advertisement to sell their metaphysics. As for those who were opposed [to Tagore's visit] in the name of advocating science, they were a little over-sensitive albeit their motivation was appreciable. When we say that it was improper to utilize the image [of Tagore] as advertisement to sell their metaphysics, we have only said this was mean behaviour, but we believe it won't succeed. The power of ideology is simply pitiably feeble for the masses, this can be grasped by us who do not understand historical materialism." "Nowadays the enthusiasts seem afraid to be carried away by venerable Tagore. This is rather too idealistic a state of mind." Zhou Zuoren also observed that the macro tendency in China at that time was "xenophobia versus traditionalism," it was in such a stormy polemic atmosphere that "Mr. Zhu Zhendan visited China unfor-

tunately and bore the fury of the 'elephant expelling group', he was all the more an innocent victim."[22] In his article *Welcome to Tagore*, Jianhu, like Zhou Zuoren, tried to moderate the atmosphere of the media. He observed: "Tagore has arrived in China, there is no denying that issues like the Oriental culture, spiritual life…. would again be debated in the open forum."[23] He thought the controversy over Tagore's China visit was, to a great extend, the misunderstanding of venerable Tagore. He requested people not to "forget his teachings on real problems". He cited one instance of Tagore's reply to the question raised by Feng Youlan (1895 – 1990) in the United States regarding China's future. Tagore said to Feng: "I have only one advice for China: 'Quickly grasp science!'"[24] Another instance was Tagore's letter to an English friend in which Tagore said after suffering all the humiliation from the West, the East would not easily love the West. Neither could the East gently yield to the West, nor could feebly begging the West do because it would make us even poorer. Jianhu used an ancient Chinese saying to conclude: "A teacher can be likened to supporting a bunch of drunkards, after making one stand up another would fall down."[25] I think the "teacher" alluded to was Tagore. His likening the Chinese intellectuals at that time to "a bunch of drunkards" is vivid analogy. In the beginning of the 20th century the Chinese intellectual circles gradually opened up, yet a bunch of narrow-minded "drunkards" remained, turning a deaf ear to the objective advices, obsessed with their desire for help from the "outsiders". They wanted to utilize Tagore to enhance their own values which is a typical attitude of "adding weight to oneself by hijacking the ocean" and "making oneself shine with other's light".

I would like to add a footnote to Jianhu's observation that what he has cited was Tagore's letter to C. F. Andrews dated July 9, 1921 in which Tagore observed:

> We in the East have long been suffering humiliation in the hands of the West. It is enormously difficult for us either to cultivate or express, any love for Western races — especially as it may have the appearance of snobbishness or prudence. The talk and behaviour of the Moderate Party in India fails to inspire us because of this —because their moderation springs from the colourless principle of expediency. The bond of expediency between the powerful and the weak must have some element in it which is degrading. (Uma 208)

We have quoted Lu Xun's 1933 observation: "I read his [Tagore's] essay on the Soviet Union in which he described himself as 'I am an Indian under the British rule', he knew himself well." Nine years after Tagore's China visit, Lu Xun saw Tagore praised the Soviet Union hence changing his opinions about Tagore. He seemed to say: "I did not see clearly before, now I know that Tagore is also an anti-imperialist patriot". Such a mentality was quite typical among the progressive Chinese intellectuals in those days. This was because, on the one hand, the Chinese intellectuals did not understand Tagore very well while on the other hand, Tagore's political thought was quite ahead of the times, and he stood on the height of geo-civilizational paradigm. Those whose minds were contained by the geopolitical paradigm (they existed not only in China, but also in large numbers in India) were like the proverbial

blind men sizing up the elephant. We have earlier alluded to Tagore's "*Janaganamana*" (*Thou Art the Ruler of the Minds of All People*) poem which has become the national anthem of India and is indeed a topmost patriotic poem. Because it has used "ruler" as imagery, there were even people vilifying it as a piece composed to welcome the British ruler, King George V who visited India in 1911 (the only British monarch ever visited the Indian colony). This is tantamount to measuring the noble motivations of a gentleman by the yardstick of a mean person's heart.

A typical example of modern Indian critic against the thought of Tagore was M. N. Roy, who was the founder of the Communist Party of India, met Dr. Sun Yat-sen, was sent by the Comintern to China to persuade Wang Jingwei (1883-1944) to remain in the KMT-CPC united front, and was expelled by Stalin and returned to India. In the 1930s, Roy criticized Tagore's thought without naming him: "The claim that the Indian people as a whole is less morally corrupt, emotionally purer, idealistically less worldly, in short, spiritually more elevated, than the bulk of the western society, is based upon a wanton disregard for reality" (Hay 263).

Roy's criticism of Tagore's thought makes us see the unending debate on the unity of opposites of inheriting tradition and modernization. In concrete terms, how should the societies of ancient civilizations like China and India modernize: should the millennial civilizational traditions be swept away as trash, or should they cast off the slough like the snake does and effect metabolism and rejuvenate their vibrancy? If we sweep away our tradition as trash and the house becomes clean and empty what should we do? China is facing such a problem now. As advocated by Lu Xun and others, the moral values of Confucius and Mencius were swept away like trash, and the morality of the new generations is a vast void spatiality. Foreign cultural trash seizes the opportunity to get in and create the spiritual crisis for the Chinese society. This, of course, is a new discourse that is beyond the scope of our essay.

It is a misconception to think of Tagore advocating the preservation of the old. He said in one of his lectures in China: "I have said that life is rebellious. Some of our Eastern schoolboys may at once jump to conclusion that this rebellion must take form to imitation of the West. But they should know that while dead custom is plagiarism from our own past life, imitation would be plagiarism from other peoples' life. Both constitute slavery to the unreal. The former, though a chain, at least fits our figure; the latter, for all its misfit, is just as much a chain. Life frees itself through its growth and not through its borrowings" (Das 99).

Let us return to the topic of the ardent patriotism of Tagore. From the critique of Roy we can see that owing to his profound sentiments for and in-depth understanding of the traditional wisdom of his own land, Tagore pointed out some of the serious drawbacks of the Western civilization from such a standpoint. We can say this was the "regard for reality" from the Indian perspective. Departing from this stand, there were people who don't love India as much as Tagore did, or don't love India at all but only love the West. To them what Roy pointed out was correct. Indeed, Tagore seems to have over-emphasized the superiority of the Indian civilization in comparison to the Western civilizations. However, in Tagore's 1924 lectures in China, he never hyped India, but only reiterated the Chinese civilization and the Eastern civilizations.

In other words, he just transformed his profound sentiments for and in-depth understanding of the traditional wisdom of his native land into the profound sentiments for and in-depth understanding of the traditional wisdom of China. He just pointed out some of the serious drawbacks of the Western civilization from this standpoint. He said at the Tsinghua Institution on May 1:

> You are not individualists in China. Your society is itself the creation of your communal soul. It is not the outcome of a materialistic, of egoistic mind, — a medley of unrestricted competition, which refuses to recognize its obligations to others. I see that you in China have not developed the prevailing malady of the world, the lunacy of an unmeaning multiplication of millions, the production of those strange creatures called multi-millionaires. (Das 63)

We find today that these words of Tagore are most relevant for the Chinese situation. In China today, we have "multiplication of millions" and the so-called "multi-millionaires", thus we have to pay attention all the more to maintain the society as the creation of "communal soul" and avoid its degeneration into "the outcome of a materialistic, of egoistic mind". In this way, China's current rage of getting rich would not turn into "lunacy" and "unmeaning," and the nouveau riche of China would not become "strange creatures".

Having said the above Tagore had absolutely no desire to wish China remaining poor and backward. I have alluded to earlier that he had gained an impression that the students of the Tsinghua Institution were "beaming with intelligence and eager interest" and he was "envious". Tagore cared for the future of China, especially the Chinese civilization, as he cared for his own country, hence offering his sincere advice. At the end of his farewell speech delivered at Shanghai, Tagore said the following:

> Some of your patriots were afraid that, carrying from India spiritual contagion, I might weaken your vigorous faith in money and materialism. I assure those who thus feel nervous that I am entirely inoffensive; I am powerless to impair their career of progress, to hold them back from rushing to the market place to sell the soul in which they do not believe. I can even assure them that I have not convinced a single sceptic that he has a soul, or that moral beauty has greater value than material power. I am certain that they will forgive me when they know the result. (Das 80)

Tagore said this to refute the criticism levied on him by Chen Duxiu and others — quite a severe rebut. The last sentence hinting "the result" is tantamount to say: You fellows who don't want your soul and don't pay attention to spiritual culture will not meet a good end. Pardon me for saying it before the tragedy occurs. Even having said this, Tagore was always confident that China would progress both in material culture and spiritual culture. In fact, among all foreigners, Tagore was one of very few who had reiterated that the Chinese civilization enjoyed the maximum from both the mate-

rial world and the spiritual world. In this respect, not only was the Chinese civilization far superior to the Western civilizations that neglected the spiritual culture, but also deserved to be emulated by India who over-emphasized the spiritual culture. Tagore said in 1937 when he inaugurated Cheena-Bhavana at Santiniketan: "[C]an anything be more worthy of being cherished than the beautiful spirit of the Chinese culture that has made the people love material things without the strain of greed, that has made them love the things of this earth, clothe them with tender grace without turning them materialistic? They [Chinese] have instinctively grasped the secret of the rhythm of things, — not the secret of power that is in science, but the secret of expression. This is a great gift, for God alone knows this secret. I envy them this gift and wish our [Indian] people could share it with them" (Tan Chung 179). These words virtually repeated what he had said at the Tsinghua Institution on May 1st, 1924. The only difference is: at Tsinghua he was saying "Let us develop the instinct that can grasp the secret," but at Santiniketan 13 years later he changed it into "They [Chinese] have instinctively grasped the secret." This means Tagore had this basic admiration for China in his blood, and it grew over time.

Conclusion

In 1924 Tagore spent his unforgettable 63rd birthday in China while we are publishing this book and organizing a seminar to greet the 150th birth anniversary (in 2011). These are milestones of Sino-Indian friendship. Tagore fulfilled his aim in the 1924 China visit, viz., strengthening the traditional friendship between the peoples of China and India, and reopening the path of cultural intercourse between the two countries. He enabled the Chinese people to understand India better, and the Indian people to know China more in those years. Tagore made indelible contributions to the annals of Sino-Indian cultural intercourse, and his contributions were even comparable to those made by the pioneers like Kumarajiva, Bodhidharma, Paramartha, Amoghavajra, Vivekananda as well as Faxian, Xuanzang, and Yijing. Thus the significance of Tagore's China visit cannot be treated lightly and belittled as "a pitiable cultural interaction," "a cultural get together with unhappy end" or using "historical misunderstanding" or "misunderstanding of the era" to describe its not having achieved the expected results as some contemporary Chinese scholars would like to conclude (Sun 331).

Those who thought Tagore was propagating the opposition to Western materialism misunderstood his real intentions. Tagore saw that with the increasing development of science and the increasing affluence of materials in the modern society, the human nature and spirit of mankind were being suppressed and their souls being imprisoned while people were acquiring the advantages and conveniences of materials. His ideal was the prosperity of Chinese and Indian as well as the world's civilizations so that the "great festival of lamps of culture" would become brilliantly lit, and it was the fire of the spiritual culture of the mankind that should ignite this festival of lamps. He realized the value and richness of the Asian civilizations. While dealing with the traditional culture he was neither a conservative, nor a radical. He was not opposed to

all changes, but was in favour of the Asian nations preserving their traditions to a certain extent, discovering the quintessence of the tradition, utilizing the tradition, and realizing their own traditional values while having a dialogue with the tradition. Tagore's was the quest for the perfection of the inner world of the humans as well as spiritual liberty, but was opposed to the expansion of material avarice that suppressed the "soul of humanity". Today the Chinese society is facing numerous problems resultant from excessive modernization, i. e., traffic jams, environment pollution, destruction of cultural heritage, ecological crisis etc. How we regret that our intellectuals in those days failed to respect Tagore's opinions, failed to listen to his advices without distorting his views! The spiritual vitality of the Chinese society would have been much better off had they done all this.

Tagore's China visit and the various attitudes in the Chinese responses wrought an unforgettable page in the annals of Sino-Indian cultural intercourse. It has provided endless food for thought for the benefit of posterity in their introspection and forward looking. Though Tagore's 1924 China visit created approbation and disapprobation in the thinking society and cultural circles of China, there is no gainsaying that the traditional friendship between the two peoples of China and India was strengthened and the path of cultural intercourse was recreated. Tagore has made "an indelible impact on modern Chinese thinkers", and "he personified the Sino-Indian cultural intercourse" (Sun 8). Tagore "promoted the friendship between the people of China and India" (Shen 3) and "provided the modern enlightenment for thinking and resolving many an important issue" (Yin 346). As Ji Xianlin observed: "Today, both in India and China, Tagore is the symbol for Sino-Indian friendship" (Wang 296). A thorough review of the polemics resultant from Tagore's China visit should provide a discourse not only in cultural interchange, but also in comparative literature and comparative cultural studies. Examining this historical event in cross-cultural and multilingual circumstances can penetrate into the psychological complexity of the Chinese native culture vis-à-vis the arrival of foreign cultures, and review the projection of the foreign cultures on China's native culture as well as the prejudices towards and misjudgments of the foreign cultures on the part of Chinese intellectuals. Such a discourse will, no doubt, help the learned circles of China to readjust their attitudes towards the foreign cultures and establish an exemplary case for reference and emulation by scholars on inter-cultural and inter-literary studies.

150 years ago Tagore was born in India. During these 150 years, he has bequeathed to India, China and the mankind a rich cultural heritage. All his writings and speeches are the crystallization of culture. By reading and listening to Tagore one enhances his/her affection for the mankind and invigorates his/her quest for *satyam* (wisdom), *shivam* (truth), and *sundaram* (beauty). We wish in the near future a cultural giant like Tagore will rise in China.

【Notes】

1. See *Battlefront of Social Sciences*, No. 2, 1979.

2. According to a survey conducted by the Reuter, 80% of Chinese and Indians are confident about the nation's future. The Japanese percentage is only 14%. Cf. http://www.chinareviewnews,com Feb. 18, 2010.

3. The Chinese custom maintains that when one lives "fully" that many years, he/she automatically advances to the next number of years. Tagore was fully 63 and advanced to 64.

4. 参见杨天宏:《新民之梦》(成都:四川人民出版社,1995 年)329。

5. 参见孙中山:《三民主义》(第五讲)。此书版本很多,请参见:http://www.360doc.com/content/08/0518/17/64043_1267974.shtml

6. 参见袁行霈等主编:《中华文明史》,第 4 卷(北京:北京大学出版社,2006 年)449。

7. 参见王维耿等编:《孙中山集外集》(上海:上海人民出版社 1990 年)531。

8. 参见《晨报》,1924 年 4 月 13 日。

9. 参见广东省社会科学院历史研究室等编:《孙中山全集》(10)(北京:中华书局 1981 - 1986 年)40。

10. See Krishna Dutta & Andrew Robinson, *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-Minded Man*(New York: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2009)251 - 2.

11.《晨报·副镌》,1924 年 6 月 13 日。

12.《晨报·副镌》,1924 年 6 月 13 日。

13. *My Country and My People* was Lin Yutang's English publication in the U. S. A. in 1935.

14. See *Rabindranath Tagore: Poems*, Calcutta: Visva-Bharati Press, *Poem* No. 123. 1942.

15. Grand father of renowned Harvard Professor and winner of Nobel Prize for Economics, Amartya Sen who used to hear Kshitimohan Sen talking about his China trip accompanying Tagore.

16. Dr. Tan Wen was Reader in Bengali of Delhi University, and she passed away in 1998 in the U. S. A.

17. See Rabindranath Tagore, *The Crescent Moon: Child-Poems*(New York: The MacMillan Company, 1913)8.

18. See Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali: Song Offerings*(Visva-Bharati & UBS Publishers' Distributors, 2003)75.

19. 参见《鲁迅全集》,第 3 册,第 5 册(北京:人民文学出版社年版,1957 年)251,469。

20. 参见《鲁迅全集》,第 4 册,第 5 册(北京:人民文学出版社年版,1957 年)14,469。

21. 参见代英:《告欢迎太戈尔的人》,《民国日报》副刊《觉悟》,1924 年 4 月 19 日。

22. 参见《晨报副刊》,1924 年 5 月 14 日,署名:陶然。

23. 参见《东方杂志》第 21 卷第 6 号,1924 年 3 月 25 日。

24. 参见 冯友兰:《与印度泰谷尔谈话——东西文明之比较观》,《新潮》第 3 卷第 1 号,1921 年 10 月 1 日。

25. 参见《东方杂志》第 21 卷第 6 号,1924 年 3 月 25 日 *Eastern Miscellany*, vol. 21, no. 6 (March 25), 1924.

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Holistic Development: A Tagorean Vision

Rajasri Basu

Abstract The paper highlights the fact that development is not to be viewed in a piecemeal fashion, nor in economic terms only. But it is to be viewed in a holistic fashion. Although these views are now being emphasized in the contemporary discourses on development, it was said by Tagore, several decades ago. It is now time to look at his visions and ideas to engage in development for an all-round development of man, whih could also launch an attack on sharp divisions in society.

Key words holistic; development; communion; rural reconstruction

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I

The world, we are living in, is a bundle of unprecedented contradictions. On the one hand, we are living in extra-ordinary opulence, unprecedented advancement in science and technology, entrenchment of democracy at the grass-root level, and on the other, there are persistence poverty and hunger, deprivation of basic freedoms and amenities, lack of education, threats to the environment and acute gender disparities. "Overcoming these problems is a central part of the exercise of development" (Sen xi).

In fact, in the post Second World War period, development has emerged as one of the leading concepts in academic discussions and debates as well as a major policy and strategy for the States to follow. Thus, it has both theoretical and practical aspects. USA and USSR emerged as the two leading superpowers of the world as also the iconic nations of development. Other countries, particularly the developing nations of the so-called 'third world' tried to follow these nations through industrial and technological advancement leading to 'economic development'. The basic objectives of this phase are modernization, industrialization, controlled market economy and/or state socialism, expansion of the base of political power and social mobility. It was thought that by 'trickling down' effect development will ultimately reach to all people.

During the 1960s, however, the theory of modernization and economic growth

came under challenge, particularly from the 'dependency' theorists who took an extremely pessimistic view of industrialization and economic growth and particularly what was followed by the developed western nations. They argued that capitalism for its own growth and development creates satellites or dependent states and the dependency of these peripheral states on the core advanced states is necessary for capitalism's own sake.

The 1980s again saw a radical shift particularly in the US and UK when a neoliberal shift on the part of the State could be noticed as the States began to bent upon an uncontrolled free market economy. Accompanied with these differences in economic growth and development, a noticeable shift could be found in terms of increasing emphasis on development along apparently non-economic factors like ecological development, sustainable development, gender development and more on 'human' development as such.

In fact, there has been a radical shift in analyzing development in the post Cold War era when due to several factors emphasis is given on an integral concept of development rather than on a purely economic one. The "trickling down" effect of development was thought to be ineffective and the Basic Needs Approach (Hettne 36) was favoured which talked of incorporation of the development guarantee for the weaker social sections in all development programmes. Development has been seen as a major process of expanding freedoms and as an instrument of removing obstacles to unfreedom by Sen (1999). Development has been seen as an instrument of social change by McMichael (2004).

II

The traits of development which are found in contemporary developmental discourses could surprisingly be found in Rabindranath Tagore's literary works. Tagore, who is regarded as one of the greatest poets, philosophers, musicians and visionaries of the world, was never a student or researcher of social science or economics or politics. He was, however, a believer in social communion, a great educationist, a deeply aware social individual and above all a true champion of humanity. Such a man obviously thought about human development, which was remarkable in many respects although conditioned by India's the then socio-economic and political conditions. Although Tagore was a true child of modernity and a true representative of Bengal renaissance, he was well aware of the fact that the western culture and civilization which were imposed by the British upon India would not be a fruitful one. What is remarkable about Tagore's idea of development is the fact that he through his various writings conveyed his ideas of development and also through his Śāntiniketan and Śriniketan experiment tried to implement his ideas of development. [1]

At the outset, it must be stated that Rabindranath being a poet, philosopher and litterateur did not present his views on development in a detailed and systematic manner. They are scattered in his essays, articles, novels, poems, short stories, dramas, diaries and also in letters written to different people. However, trying to assimilate the idea of development from all these sources would be too big a task, which would not be possible within the purview of a single paper. The author of this paper

will try to analyse his ideas of development by focusing mainly on his essays and articles and also by delving into his Ŝāntiniketan-Ŝriniketan experiment as that would give a complete vision of his ideas of development.

Tagore, as should be noted, is a societal man. He believed that social norms, values and beliefs constitute the Indian psyche. Love for each other, togetherness, inter-personal relations constitute the basic ingredients of society. However, for Tagore it is the spirit of sacrifice that is more difficult to attain than the spirit of love. The society, in fact, truly grows up by shedding one's ego, one's selfishness and one's altruism. Tagore talked about a society, which is a conglomerate of people who are self-reliant, sacrificing, welfarist and collectivist.

When Tagore talked about development, he talked about the development of this man, not the one, who pursues his own development, his own career, his own ambitions to the detriment of others, but the one who believes in the development of all living beings of the society. Tagore was also a great humanist. By development, he did not mean the development of material goods only but the all-round development of man where production of material goods plays a particular role. As Krishna Kripalini described him, "he was human and humane, a fully developed person who loved to experience the joys of life" (Kripalani xv).

Tagore's vision of development of man living in society is holistic in the sense that he did not talk about his concept of human development from several facets and discussing each in a separate isolated manner. He believed in the development of man who is very much living in the society from an integral whole where nothing is imposed externally but has grown up from within the society. He believed in the harmony of life. His personal life was harmonious and noble which has been reflected in his creation at all spheres. In fact, all through his life he tried to bring harmony in every sphere, wherever there was any possibility of contradiction.

> The basic and most robust characteristic of Tagore's philosophy of life was his emphasis on the development of the human personality and his deep-set conviction that there is no inherent contradiction between the claims of the so called opposites—the flesh and the spirit, the human and the divine, love of life and love of God, joy in beauty and pursuit of truth, social obligation and individual rights, respect for tradition and the freedom to experiment, love of one's people and faith in the unity of mankind. These seeming opposites can and must be reconciled, not by tentative compromises and timid vacillation but by building a true harmony out of the apparent discordance. (Kripalini 136)

Tagore's writings were most pronounced in the early 20th century. It was at this time that western scholars also displayed their ideas of harmony and one such noted scholar was L. T. Hobhouse, who while championing the ideas of social liberalism, enunciated the ethical doctrine of social harmony. While discussing liberty, he believed that it was important relative to a specific end—the realization of personality; that a set of liberties that could assure opportunities for self-fulfillment to all depended on a complex system of social restraints. To Hobhouse, there were several ways of social de-

velopment—but most led to suffering and conflict. The harmonic way was a narrow path, and to keep it required conscious adjustment, to reconcile the diverse moments of social life. For the individual, the good consisted in the realization of his or her potential in a balanced expansion of personality. For society, it lay in the simultaneous and mutually reinforcing fulfillment. This was the essential bearing of Hobhouse's ethical harmony. On the one hand, the various dimensions of individual life should be harmonized in a well-rounded personality; on the other, the trajectories of self-realization adopted by the different members of the community should harmonize in a general flourishing (Meadowcroft xviii). In his doctrine of ethical harmony, Hobhouse was principally motivated by his desire to establish justice and his passion for humanity.

Hobhouse's theory was teleological in the sense that he wanted to modify liberalism by making it more social and by trying to reconcile the relation between individual and society, and thereby developing a version of social liberalism. Tagore's vision of society, on the contrary, was a true successor of Vedic and upanisadic harmony, on the one hand and East-West harmony, on the other. Throughout his life he never discarded the enduring values of the West; at the same time he deeply revered the upanishadic values.[2] His earnest efforts were to bring about a new harmony in the society which would give shape to a progressive civilization. He dreamt for the day when all the nations of the world would come and get united on this Indian soil.

In conversation with Albert Einstein, when the scientist told the poet that modern physics do not look into things in contradiction and cited the examples of clouds which look as such from a distance but as disorderly droplets when seen from close quarter, the poet replied that there are parallels in human psychology. Our passions and desires are unruly, but our character subdues these elements into a harmonious whole. It is the constant harmony of chance and determination which makes the drama of existence eternally new and living.

III

Human Development that Rabindranath talked about was holistic in concept. His conception of human development can be analysed from (a) physical health; (b) educational development; and (c) developing the spirit of communion. And in all these traits of human development, he tried to find out that harmony which informs all his ideas.

Tagore was very much conscious and particular about a good physical health. He underscored on physical strength and considered a lean, weak and frail man as not being able to achieve his goal. Tagore was very conscious about food, nutrition and exercise. He himself was very sincere about maintaining his own health. In his childhood he was trained in wrestling. He used to bathe in cold water in the morning almost all through his life. He knew horse riding, was an expert swimmer who could cross the river padmā[3] and could walk fifteen to twenty miles at a stretch. He dreamt of a healthy society where he himself tried to set an example.

In one of his letters written to Pearson (1922), he referred to the santāl[4] women who lived near Ŝāntiniketan as the ideal of physical life. In them the ideal of physical

life finds its perfect development only because they are active in giving it expression in work. Their figures and their movements attain beautiful harmony because they are always being tuned to life's activities. The poet appreciated and admired the cleanliness of their limbs, which never get soiled even by constant contact with dirt. He believed that cleanliness cannot be induced by artificial polishing and caring but by the body's own current of movements, which comes from the blood, muscles, nerves, from the completeness of physical health. He had an immense love and faith on work and to him love and work are like sun and light for love's expression is in work and where there is no work, there it is a dead world.

Tagore's second major point of emphasis is on the educational development of man. He understood that a proper method of imparting education as well as a proper curriculum are necessary not only for the development of an individual but also for the development of the society at large. Tagore was very much against traditional learning and also against imitating blindly the western education. He emphasized on informal education along with formal education. Tagore tried to combine western knowledge with Indian tradition and tried to introduce a new spirit, a new philosophy and a new technique in the sphere of education, and thereby, tried to modernize Indian education in a truly Indian manner. But he did not rest just by listing the components of education. He implemented his ideas on education first by establishing an informal school for children at Shilaidaha Kuthibari[5], followed by the establishment of Ŝāntiniketan brahmacharyāshram in 1901, which ultimately culminated into the establishment of Visva Bhārati in 1918.

Tagore's views on education may briefly be summarized as follows:

First, in his scheme of education, the role of nature has been specifically emphasized. In fact, his concern for nature, his emphasis in incorporating nature into educational curriculum show his views regarding the need for establishing bonding between nature and society. In Japanyatrī (1916), bhūmilakshmī (1918) and tapovan (1909), he expressed his anxiety about the rift between man and nature. Here also, he considered man and nature in an integral whole, in a balancing union which would be disturbed with too much mechanization, urbanization and industrialization. He wanted to make people aware from their school days. Second, he emphasized on joyful learning. He was very much against rote learning and forced learning, which he beautifully portrayed in totākahinī. He almost revolted against this type of learning, when he himself was a child and tried to do away with it by establishing the educational institution founded by him at Ŝāntiniketan. Third, he favoured learning through mother tongue. He emphasized on introducing Bengali as the medium of instruction even in higher studies. Finally, he was very clear about the aims of education. He believed that education should aim at building self-confidence and it should be formulated taking the socio-economic and political conditions of the country in which it is situated.

In Tagore's view, education was not intellectual development alone. It should also develop a student's aesthetic nature and creativity. The quest for knowledge and physical activity in an agreeable environment were integral parts of the process. Freedom and creativity are linked in Tagore's thought, one conditioning the other. It was

necessary, Tagore felt, to make the younger generation aware of their national cultural heritage and to grasp its significance for them. At the same time, education should bring children face to face with the cultures of other countries and persuade them to learn from them.

He was very much concerned with women's education. His educational institutions have almost always been co-educational and the number of female students is conspicuously large at Ŝāntiniketan. He wanted women and men to be offered similar theoretical courses with separate practical courses for women, since their roles in life differed from those of men. Tagore considered teachers to be very important in any scheme of education. He wanted teachers to help young children to grow on their own as a gardener helps the young plants to grow. He wanted to use education as an instrument of change to make Indian young men and women more rational and less subject to meaningless social and individual rituals.

Tagore believed that the more people go beyond the limitations of their animal nature, the closer they come to humanism, freedom and unity and are then able to develop their creativity. (Jha 603) This quest alone gives a meaning to life, and education is an effort to make life meaningful. Here the aims of the individual and those of the community have become almost one.

The final edifice of Tagore's concept of development is the spirit of communion which he forcefully presented in 'SvadeŜī Samāj' (1904). He firmly believed that Indian society is deep rooted in the Indian psyche with everyone having a duty toward everyone. Tagore never lost faith upon people and believed in people's power. He talked about a social leader in this essay, who unlike a political leader could really unite people. Tagore was deeply concerned about a probable threat to Hindu-Muslim unity and believed that a social leader could only foster unity amongst people.

IV

As stated earlier Tagore did not confine himself to suggestions and prescriptions only. His experiments with respect to education at Ŝāntiniketan and with respect to rural reconstruction at Ŝrīniketan are well known. The Ŝāntiniketan brahmacharyāŜram, which Tagore built for imparting all-round education to pupils leading to a harmonious development of body and soul was a residential school where teachers and pupils led a communion life. Here along with conventional studies of science, literature, humanities and social science, training of songs, dances, painting as also training of judo and other forms of martial art were imparted. ViŜva Bhārati, which was the culmination of Tagore's educational experiment, was a place where, he combined Indian tradition and modern European education. It was perhaps, the only University at least at that time where programmes of rural reconstruction were incorporated. Thus rural reconstruction evolved as one of the basic ingredients of Tagorean educational system.

Following the ideas of some of the worthy sons of India like Rājā Rāmmohan Roy[6], Prafulla Chandra Roy[7] and Swāmi Vivekānanda[8], Tagore considered rural development as the basis of India's development. Tagore while performing his duties as a zamindār[9] at Ŝilāidaha and Patisar[10] in 1880 came in direct contact with villagers and could share their sufferings and joy, sorrows and happiness, complaints and ful-

filness. From experiencing the lives of the poor villagers, Tagore channelized his ideas of rural development into a constructive programme called rural reconstruction.

Tagore started his programme of rural reconstruction by purchasing a house and land at Surul[11] from Lord S. P. Sinha in 1912 which formed the nucleus of his rural reconstruction model. The programme started with a general survey of rural life and proper investigation into the economic and social problems of village life. Kālimohan Ghosh assisted in this survey and evolved a methodology which could very well serve as a model method of data collection. The data thus gathered served as an essential tool of decision-making before the real work got started. The main objective of the rural reconstruction programme was to try to flood the choked bed of village life with a stream of happiness.

Ŝrīniketan aimed at combining work with joy. Picnics, excursions, games, music, theatrical performances and celebrating socio-religious festivals constituted regular features of the calendar. Varsha Baran (New Year's Day), Varshāmangal (Rainy Season Festival), Nabānna Utsav (the New Rice Festival), Vasantotsav (the Spring Festival) were—and still are—all regular Features. Tagore added Halkarshan (Ploughing the Land Festival) and Van Mahotosava (Tree Planting). Apart from adding joy to dreary village life, some of these festivals brought students and villagers to work together.

Tagore realized that the problems of rural reconstruction were manifold and the problems related to health, economy, education etc. are interlinked and should be attacked in an integral manner and not in a piecemeal fashion. From the very beginning, Elmhirst, the principal architect of the programme laid emphasis on gathering of knowledge through survey and attacking the problems. Here also alongside the agricultural development through cooperative and collective farming, emphasis was given on education. Thus, rural reconstruction was incorporated in the educational curriculum of the āshramites and education was incorporated in the rural reconstruction programme and thereby making both important and inter-dependent.

A few words about gathering and dissemination of knowledge as conceived by Tagore at this point would not be out of place, particularly in view of the fact that these have become so very important for any research, School or Departments in an institute of higher learning. In the Ŝrīniketan experiment, it has been conceived in the following way:

> 1. To take up the problem of the villages and the field into classroom for study, discussion and for probable solutions;
>
> 2. To carry the knowledge and experience gained through classroom to the villagers in their endeavour to improve their sanitation and health, to develop their resources and credit, to help them to sell their product and buy their products to the beat of their advantages, to teach them better methods of growing crops, and of keeping vegetables and livestock, to encourage them to learn and practice art and crafts and to bring home to them the benefits of associated life, mutual aid and common endeavour. (Ray, Biswas and Sen 96)

Tagore was convinced that what the villagers needed most for their own salvation was knowledge, a cooperative spirit and an encouragement to self-help.

V

Thus the notion of development that Tagore talked about is essentially about human development. But he was not human-centric as he viewed of development as one of integration, harmony and balance. It is like his songs where the words complement the music and create a perfect harmony. Rabindranath's love of nature was inspired by the awareness that all living beings, including animals, trees and plants, are endowed with a soul. On this level of consciousness, human beings are equal with "low" creatures and plants. We are all co-creatures of God's creation. Accordingly, Tagore's praise and worship of nature is born of a deep spirit of togetherness and feeling of a creational bond between humans and nature. In very many of his poems and songs, this integration of nature and humanity could be found. This emphasis on ecological development or what is called sustainable development has recently got currency in the western discourse of development.

Tagore always thought of human beings in their totality. Again of late in India, reference to inclusive development is increasingly being made. But Tagore dreamt of inclusive development and did not rest with dreams; he put them into practice by focusing upon the marginalized people in first his kāligrām and then in his ? rīniketan experiment. He had enormous respect and faith upon the power of the marginalized people and enunciated the premise of popular participation in the process of development in pallīr unnati (1915). Today the Indian planning process is exactly talking about these aspects by emphasizing micro-level planning, bottom-up approach and others. Tagore's thinking was inclusive and over-arching in another sense too. He found no divisions amongst the Hindus, Muslims and the sāntals, who lived adjacent to Ŝrīniketan .

Tagore's system of education has found a particular place in today's world. At one point of time, when Tagore was talking about learning through fun, there were few-takers. Ironically, it is exactly upon this aspect that the modern system of education is emphasizing. He wanted to unfold the entire personality through music, songs, dance, theatre, art, contemplation of nature, meditation and social service. In the educational scenario of today's world, the demons of "usefulness" and "efficiency" are being tamed by the intentless playful activity of Tagorean education. The crux of Tagore's educational philosophy was learning from nature and life. Tagore also attached great importance to tapasyā and sādhanā. Tagore was critical of the way in which education was designed to be job-oriented. Referring to its end of earning bread and butter Tagore observed,

> From the very beginning such education should be imparted to village folks so that they may know well what mass welfare means and may become practically efficient in all respects for earning their livelihood. (pallīr unnati 501)

Finally, a word or two about Tagore's dance movement in the process of develop-

ment. Dance, a great form of art was unfortunately looked down upon by the Bengali educated middle class during Tagore's time. Tagore not only brought back dance's old glory by incorporating them in his song-plays and dance dramas but was also able to include in school curriculum for all-round development of people. Moreover, Tagore considered these dance as excellent exercises, where participant performers could know each other and thereby could develop a feeling of communion amongst themselves.

Thus, it is the whole, integral society's development that Tagore talked about, it is the harmony of nature and humanity that Tagore visualized; and it is the integrity of education and rural reconstruction that Tagore dreamt of in his ideas of development. I may conclude by referring to one of poet's immortal songs:

The people of the world are mesmerized by the tune of the world.
It is everywhere; in the land, in the water and in the sky,
In the forests and jungles, in the rivers and streams,
In the mountains, caves and the coasts. [12]

【Notes】

1. Sāntiniketan and Ŝrīniketan are two adjoining places in the district of Birbhum in the state of West Bengal. The poet built up his educational system at Sāntiniketan, which blossomed into Visva Bhārati University, where an integrated system of education is imparted; while Ŝrīniketan is his site of rural reconstruction.
2. Upanishadic value is difficult to comprehend. It may be referred to as the attainment of Self as delight, where the all-pervasive is hidden behind the apparent names and forms.
3. Padmā is the principal distributary of river Ganga, flowing into the then East Bengal (the modern day Bangladesh).
4. Santāl, one of the largest ethnic groups of India live in West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Jharkhand. A large settlement is at Birbhum district, where Vishva Bhārati is located.
5. Shilāidaha is a place in the Kustia district of Bangladesh.
6. Rammohan Roy is regarded as the first modern man of India. He was a social reformer, and was a pioneer of Bengal renaissance during the 18th century. Prafulla Chandra Roy was a great scientist specializing in Chemistry who also ventured into the field of entrepreneurship during late 19th – early 20th century.
8. Swami Vivekānanda was a monk and the chief disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. Paramaha. nsa and founded the Ramakrishna Mission, one of the largest philanthropic societies during late 19th century; one of the greatest exponents of Vedāntic philosophy, he played a key role in introducing it in Europe and America.
9. Zamindār is a landlord.
10. Patisar is a village in the Naogaon district of Bangladesh.
11. Surul is a village in the Bolpur sub-division of the district of Birbhum in West Bengal, India.
12. A song of Geetimālya, written by Tagore in 1914, translated by the author.

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Bjørnson and Women's Social Emancipation

Tove Bakke

Abstract In his writings and discourses, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson focuses on issues of equal rights, and has strong ideas about the rights for freedom and equal treatment for each and every individual, which results in a logical consequence: the appeal for equal rights for women. Through his outstanding gifts both as a poet and a speaker, and his extensive political participation in the world that surrounded him, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson made his ideas an extraordinary impact on social problems in general and women's emancipation issues in particular. In the 19th century, while the literary current changed from Romanticism to Realism, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson's literary writings also developed from more romantic and poetic stories and dramas to realistic writings, and therefore demonstrated the realistic significance then and even today.

Key words Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson; women's emancipation; sexual morals; realism

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> "I wonder what I shall get to see on the other side of the mountain …"
> "Out, I want to get out!"

These lines, as I remember from one of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson poems, and from a rural story of his that I read as a child, have always been the guidelines of my life. Whether the citations are absolutely correct or not, does not matter, what counts is the essence: To get out there and see the world! This motto is evoked in me every time I hear the name Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, who was a passionate writer, an emotional poet and an extraordinarily gifted speaker. He was also well read and very active in the contemporary debate.

In his writings and discourses, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson focuses on issues of equal rights, discrimination, language, the nation, and the importance of the rural cultural heritage. He had strong ideas about the right to freedom and equal treatment for each and every individual. Equal rights for women is a logical consequence of this attitude, because equality between the sexes means equality in society. As an independent woman in a free, democratic society, I see myself as a result of his work. This acknowledgement shall be my approach to him here: I have chosen to talk about Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson in view of female emancipation, which cannot be done without referring to the ideas about this question in his lifetime, mainly the last two thirds of the 19th century, and I shall also briefly refer to the situation for women in our country

today.

In the early days of Norwegian women's liberation and women's rights movement, there were many strong and outstanding spokeswomen working actively for changes in contemporary Norway. Already as a quite young boy, 16 years of age, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson got to know an important feminist in his home town of Molde, and is believed to have been greatly influenced by her. He was already at this young age more than ordinarily interested in politics and society. He also read a lot, and got fuel for his ideas from abroad.

Though in all his life he would be fighting for a modern view on women, he knew equality of gender could not be achieved from one day to the next—the society had to change accordingly. At seventy (around 1900), Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson said that it was always clear to him that "the great reforms to make society a better one, shall come to nothing as long as women are not included in this strife. (…) And that now, (at the beginning of the 20th century) signs are showing that he was right in his belief in them." [1] One of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnsons great achievements was to forward the idea of equal rights for women in the consciousness of people in general.

Bjørnstjerne Bjørnsons's Influence in Modern Times

Bjørnstjerne Bjørnsons's influence can not be neglected in Modern times. In the 21st century, as a general rule, most young Norwegians take women's equality for granted, and Bjørnstjerne Bjørnsons writings as something from a remote past. But in many ways he was very modern! And the past is not as far away as we often think. Young Norwegians whose parents immigrated from poor countries to Norway during the last 3 – 4 decades, even today recognize the actuality of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson's short stories from the Norwegian rural areas 150 years ago. The stories often speak about young people's identity and dreams, of the rights and equal worth of all human beings. Also women have the right to follow their vocation. In Norway, women got the right to vote 1913, three years after his death, while those in Great Britain only got it in 1928, US and Canada 1929 and France as late as 1944!

What is the situation of women in Norway of today?

Sixty-four percent of women attend college studies and university. Since year 2000, the percentage of men and woman in university and college studies were the same. After year 2000, the percentage of women has been rising every year. It is also interesting to see that many young women of minority background—Pakistan, Turkey, Viet Nam, Somalia now are students at a high level, and very accomplished, too. In Norwegian political life, after the most recent state and municipal elections, 40% of the representatives in parliament are women, and 50% of the members of government. But even today, equal pay check for equal work is not the rule, and various other problems of the kind are still to be solved. Just to mention it, at the same time Norwegian women give birth to more children than the women in any other European country.

So what does all this have to do with Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, a 19th century writer?

First, a brief survey of history will give you a picture of Europe at his time:

Between 1848 – 52 half Europe was moved by nationalist and liberating revolutions, but as we know, most attempts at social change were crushed by the bourgeoisie. The years from 1848 and onwards is a period of great confusion, great changes, wars, industrial development, and there was the Paris Commune in 1871.

Society goes through radical, even total change: with industrial rising, trade, the modern world—capitalism, labour movements, bourgeois growth and wealth, cities in expansion, progress of science and techniques like electricity, the telephone. It is also a period of progress, and of "peace and prosperity". Modernity was the sign of the times, much like it is now (particularly here in Shanghai): The French poet Arthur Rimbaud claimed that "il faut être moderne", "we must be modern".

Emancipation of Women

Following the French Revolutions in 1789 and 1848, and the American Declaration of Independence 1776, of course, there was a growing consciousness regarding the role of women in many countries. In Norway, these ideas particularly gained ground after Norway got our own Constitution in1814, after 400 year as a Danish colony. Of course, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, was not the only person to forward gender equality and equality in society. But with his intelligence, knowledge, his rhetorical gift and capability of conveying his thoughts and ideas through emotional channels, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson was appealing to a very broad public. Apparently, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson was much inspired by the British philosopher Mr. John Stuart Mill and his collaborators Mrs. Harriet Taylor, and (later) also Ms. Helen Taylor. John Stuart Mill was very respectful of their skills and saw them as his equals, partly co-authors of books and writings in his name. *On Liberty* (1858) and *The Subjection of Women* (1869), were translated and well-known in the Nordic countries at the time. So were the works of other central thinkers. Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson admired Stuart Mill's way of having long and strong professional relationships to women. He himself had lifelong friendships with women, and learned a lot from both them and his wife Karoline, views that he eagerly conveyed to his audience.

A Norwegian as a Scandinavian, a European and a Man of the World

As mentioned before, his century was a century of enormous changes in Europe and the western world. Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson fought against suppression of people and peoples all his life.

In Norway, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson fought for national independence, i. e. human independence.

Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson was a great poet. He wrote our national anthem *Ja vi elsker dette landet/Yes, we love this country*, which speaks mainly of freedom, peace and nature. It is nothing like the French hymn, *La Marseillaise*, which is a bloody violent story! But then France had a more violent development than little Norway.

Changes in Art: from Romanticism to Realism

As society changes, so does art. What were the literary trends in the Europe that influenced Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson's writing? The coming of realism played a most important role.

In literature, the change from romanticism to realism is strong: in their novels, writers like Balzac, Flaubert, Stendhal and Tolstoy showed to their readers the world that surrounded them. And of course, soon realism came to dominate all arts.

The first realistic novel in Norway was written by a woman, Camilla Collett: *The District Governor's Daughters*, published in 1855. She belonged to the more bourgeois class, but wrote about society in general. Some of her main themes were the consequences of being married against one's will, the consequences of illegal abortions, the bad conditions for workers and especially female workers. Now, does this seem very far from today's reality in most parts of the world? After the death of her husband, though, Camilla herself was quite poor and had to give her three eldest children to be raised by relatives. Her writings had a huge impact, though, and she is a classic that is still read.

Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson's literary writings also developed from more romantic and poetic stories and dramas to realism. He often wrote about women, and his first novel, *Synnøve Solbakken* (1857) is a story of a farmer's daughter who wants to marry below her social rank.

The Fisherman's Daughter is a story of liberation for a young girl who breaks through small town conventions to realize herself and her dream of being an actress. As to who was the model of this young woman, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson always answered: But don't you see, that girl is myself.

His melodramatic epic poem *Bergljot* (1870) is about the saga heroine and wife of a famous viking.

In his novel *Magnhild*, which was published in 1877, he forwards the issue of woman's right to divorce and lets the wife leave an arranged marriage based on lies – not at all on love. And this, ladies and gentlemen, was actually two years before Ibsen's Nora leaves her husband and family, an action which as we know, has had a huge impact on society all over the world, not least in China. Nora leaves the house, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson's Magnhild leaves her country and her continent.

Not to forget, as early in 1865 Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson had written the first of his plays that focuses on the lack of freedom for woman, in his drama *The Newly Wed*, that was actually performed in Shanghai Theatre Academy in 2009. And this drama's topic is the constraints of tradition, and young bourgeois women's loyalty to their parents.

Some of the themes are of course less interesting to us today than to the audience of that period. But 100 – 150 years is not a very long time in the history of mankind. and in his basic thinking about equality in society and between the sexes, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson can seem surprisingly modern and up to date. I'll also remind you that the theme of modern woman and her situation in society was a constant preoccupation to his fellow writers of the time.

As a dramatic, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson is part of the Scandinavian realist theatre.

Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson's *Leonarda* (1873) is one of the first of a large series of women in the realist Scandinavian theatre, and the expression of a theme and of an epoca. Leonarda is divorced, and the general double morals pushes her to leave her country for America.

I'll just mention a few of the more internationally known women heroines:

Ibsen's *Nora* (1879) is very sure of what she wants, in a world where appearances are important: "Breaking out from her world, breaking up with her world." And Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* (1890) is opposite to *Nora*, Hedda is fighting against her society and becomes a victim of her time. She is manipulative, living in a world of lies and inner emptiness.

Normally, she should be called Hedda Tesman, after her husband. Gabler was her name before marrying. But according to Ibsen, his (quote) "intention giving her this name, was to suggest that the personality of Hedda should be seen more as her father's daughter than her husband's wife".[2] This play is actually on in Oslo this season, directed by 29 year old Peer Perez Øian. It is his debut as a director, and he focuses on Hedda's "free choice", and it's eventual consequences.

And finally there is *Miss Julie* (1888) by August Strindberg from Sweden, a country with an aristocratic tradition that Norway does not have, about the aristocrat woman and the male servant, a naturalist play about class, battle of the sexes, lust, power etcetera.

But to get back to my main topic, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and woman's emancipation, I would like to take a look at the effects of another play by this writer, from as early as 1883.

In 1880 – 81 he stayed in the US, where he also came into contact with US Women's movement, and among other things visited an important and impressive Women's College.

Two years later, in Paris, actually, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson finished his play *The Gauntlet* whose topic is sexual morals, specifically sex before marriage and the general attitude in society that a woman must be "pure" before marriage, whereas a man's sexual relationships were accepted. The main female character, Svava, throws a glove in the face of her fiancée. (Throwing a glove/gauntlet is traditionally a very strong challenge to another person, particularly a man.) She has the courage not to accept that he has had a relationship to a married woman. She is soon to be married herself, and in her opinion he, like she, has to be pure before marriage.

The Gauntlet was a drama written with the intention to create a debate, and so it did, there was a huge controversy also in the neighboring countries, called the Glove Fight. Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson wanted equal rights for woman and man in society, and accordingly, he wanted the same ethics for woman and man. (In this, I'll remind you, we are mostly talking of the bourgeois, middle class. In the countryside, the girls were freer, and opened their bed room windows to the boy they preferred …) The drama thus attacks the widely accepted double morals and the writer of the drama was instantly attacked from various sides for his ideas: by the radical liberals for being too conservative; by the conservative Christians for being too radical! The Church

was particularly critical to the play. Now, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson himself was in favor of monogamy and family. But he saw this as a means to ensure a stable society. And he saw the stable, long term relationship and the family as the best way to achieve this. But he, opposite the Church, wanted this to be based on rational thought and knowledge, not on Christian morals or religious standards. It was also said, during these fierce discussions across the Nordic country borders, that he was anti-woman, anti-freedom, conservative and in fact suppressive! So all in all, he was criticized for forwarding the exact opposite of what he himself wanted, which was freedom and equality! How could this be? At least it shows that Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson was not a conformist. And he not only liked, but seemed to thrive on controversy. Luckily, his main opponents outside the Church—and now I talk about intellectuals, artists, bohemians—did not have the support in society that he had. And, they did not have his outstanding capacity for conveying ideas in a way that people could emotionally understand and accept.

The Backbone in Fighting

Along with his contacts with woman's associations, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson was constantly working for better conditions for children, working class, and women. And in this "glove fight" about morality, he had on his side the woman's association, who liked his way of considering family as the pillar of society. Behind him were also the social and socialist movements that wanted to strengthen family values as a means of bettering the conditions of the poor people and the workers.

Now, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson was never a spectator, he was not sitting on a mountain top creating theories, he lived in the middle of everything. He was, by nature, both a politician and a poet. In both ways, he was an extremely active part of society. He loved standing in the middle of the fight—any fight as long as they were about justice and respect. He was immensely interested in what was going on, he was always teaching and propagating his ideas, defending his ideals, constantly fighting for human rights and against political subjection in several European countries. And his works were translated to other languages during his lifetime. This fits perfectly into what we today would call his image as a global person. Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson travelled constantly, always wondering what he would get to see on the other side of the next mountain.

So how about his personal life in all this activity and debating?

It is not always easy to combine ideas and real life. He had a strong wife, Karoline. And she had her own thoughts about society and morals that she expressed very clearly. She, too, was of the opinion that women were underestimated in society, and she was especially concerned by the life of women in the farms. And Norway was a country of farming at that time, mostly very small and poor farms which, by the way, led to a massive emigration mainly to the North America. And Karoline was patient and wise. Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson was impatient, easily excited. He poured out masses of articles and letters that Karoline would then have to put in a proper shape—and if

she found him too wild, too hotheaded, that he was writing before thinking—she just let his writings lie for a couple of days so that he could calm down and have a second look before he sent them. She was his reason. If he had had the mobile phone and internet possibilities of today, he probably would have gotten a lot more enemies!

Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson was loved by many. At his funeral in Oslo/Christiania a hundred years ago, many thousands followed him to his grave, among them a lot of women and children. 50 years after his death, grateful delegations from foreign countries still showed up at his home Aulestad to show their respect and honour the memory of an extraordinarily generous and compassionate fighter for justice, wherever it was lacking and for whoever had not got it.

【Notes】

1. See Edvard Hoem, "Vennskap i storm - Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson 1875 – 1892." *BB Biography Volume II*, which is to be published in December 2010, Oslo.
2. See Teatro realista escandinavo, Editorial Pueblo y Educacion, Ciudad de Habana, Cuba, 1972/1985.

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比昂逊精神:仁者爱人

刘明厚

内容摘要:“仁者爱人”正是比昂逊精神。《新婚的一对》反映了当时社会关系和家庭关系中的矛盾对立,对以独生子女家庭为主的当代中国社会依然具有现实意义。《破产》一方面尖锐地批判了商业欺诈行为,另一方面刻画了一个有情有义的年轻人。表现劳资矛盾的戏剧《超越人力》以温和的姿态让矛盾缓解,显得有些不够真实,不过后现代主义者整体加以拒绝的人本主义和仁爱精神,却是高尚的比昂逊一贯宣扬并坚信不疑的,也是当代人不可或缺的。

关键词:仁者爱人　比昂逊精神　新婚的一对　破产　超越人力

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Title　Bjørnson Spirit: The Benevolent Loves Others

Abstract　“The benevolent love others” is exactly the spirit of Bjørnson. The play, *The Newly Married* reveals the conflicts in society and families long time ago, and it also carries practical significance to the present Chinese society dominated by single-child families. From a particular perspective, *The Newly Married* is calling us to meditate on an issue: after setting up their small families, how should the newly married couples face the new independence and create their new happy life through hard work and tolerance. The social problem play *The Bankrupt*, on the one hand, severely criticizes the commercial fraud; on the other hand describes a kind-hearted young man who spent his own savings to save the boss from bankruptcy and won true love at the same time. Of course, his later symbolic play, *Beyond Our Powers*, is rather moderate when he starts with acute labor-and-capital conflict and class struggles, but ends with moderate solution of the conflicts. The benevolent people-oriented spirit, which the postmodernists have refused to accept while Bjørnson believes and prompts, is of critical importance to us at present.

Key words　the benevolent loves others; Bjørnson spirit; *The Newly Married*; *The Bankrupt*; *Beyond Our Powers*

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挪威戏剧家易卜生的剧作从1914年被介绍到中国,在中国的传播与演出已有近百年的历史,直至今日仍然深受国人关注。然而,与易卜生并驾齐驱的同时

代伟大戏剧家、诗人、小说家、挪威国歌词作者比昂斯泰纳·比昂逊在中国却遭到冷落,尽管在20世纪60年代,中国人翻译了一批比昂逊的戏剧、小说来纪念他逝世50周年。这种冷暖不均的 外来文化的接受现象,在我看来与我们中国近代戏剧改良过程中对戏剧功能的认识密切相关。事实上,中国近代戏剧的建设从一开始就站在"实用主义"立场上,把文艺的社会功能放在首位,把具有强烈批判精神的易卜生及其戏剧作为启迪民众、推动社会前进的工具。这一时代性、社会性的工具论意识,形成了中国文学艺术的"战斗传统",而戏剧的美学意识、自觉认知和戏剧文化的本体建构却被忽略与冷落。

在纪念比昂逊逝世百年的时候,当我重读这位1903年诺贝尔文学奖得主的作品时,完全被这位真诚的人道主义者所感动。比昂逊怀着一种悲天悯人的仁爱之心,怀着以善抗恶的人生观,把希望带给了人类和世界。许多中国戏剧家、评论家不喜欢比昂逊作品的结局,批评比昂逊总是给戏剧按上一个"光明"的尾巴,缺少真实性,而我却欣赏他这种少有的赤子之心。事实上,和我有同感的还大有人在。例如2009年11月,当上海戏剧学院上演比昂逊的《新婚的一对》时,不少观众被感动了,我的一位朋友非常感慨地对我说:"构建和谐社会需要比昂逊精神"。什么是"比昂逊精神"? 在我看来就是中文中的四个字——"仁者爱人"。毛泽东时代我们强调的是阶级斗争,改革开放以后,受经济利益和物质欲望的驱使,使得人性与道德遭遇尴尬,仁者爱人正是我们亲手丢弃的。

一、"爱情永远是一种献身"——麦希尔德

二幕剧《新婚的一对》创作于1865年,是斯堪的纳维亚地区第一部市民问题剧,描写了一个受过大学教育的年轻人阿克尔成为一个贵族世家的女婿,丰衣足食却不能让他开心起来。为了追求独立自主的婚姻生活,阿克尔在新婚第三天便果断地宣布:搬离庄园到城市里去独立谋生。一石激起千层浪,这个一向和睦的家庭关系立即变得紧张起来。比昂逊敏锐地捕捉到当时社会关系和家庭关系中微妙的矛盾对立,将两个社会阶层、两代人之间的鸿沟恰如其分地表现出来。差不多一个半世纪过去了,这部在比昂逊作品中并不受到重视的戏剧,却与当今的中国社会产生了千丝万缕的联系。从当代中国国情来看,80后独生子女都到了谈婚论嫁的时候,不少外地的、农村的大学生毕业后都愿意留在大城市,上门女婿并不鲜见。然而,不同地域的生活习性、家庭文化与经济背景的差异,都市与农村,大上海与小城镇之间形成的消费观念和生活理念的不一致,形成了大大小小的家庭问题,翁婿之间、婆媳之间的矛盾,新婚夫妻之间的摩擦不可避免地爆发出来。独生子女如何走出父母爱的视线,真正独立自主地生活,学会彼此宽容相爱,通过自己的辛勤努力与奋斗,共同去开创甜蜜的新生活,比昂逊的《新婚的一对》从这一角度引发了当代中国人的反思与共鸣。

比昂逊是一个擅于在行动中刻画人物的戏剧家。《新婚的一对》中的"舞会"事件,是激发家庭矛盾的导火索。阿克尔的朋友专门为这对新婚燕尔举办舞

会,就因为母亲半夜咳嗽了两声不想前往,妻子罗拉不顾阿克尔的再三请求也拒绝参加舞会。被压抑的阿克尔忍无可忍,终于不再循规蹈矩,他故意放声唱起歌来,故意挪动客厅里的桌子椅子。这在普通市民家里本来是件很平常的事情,可是在这个贵族世家里,也是这部戏的规定情境里,却引起了全家人的恐慌,所有的人立刻涌进客厅,以为阿克尔脑子出了毛病。这一戏剧场面显得有点夸张,但这仅仅是阿克尔追求独立人格和自由精神的开始,他所激起的反应是强烈而迅速的。

一个并没有家庭背景的上门女婿,竟然在一个高高在上的贵族家里不按规矩行动,斗胆搅浑了水,翁婿之间立即对立起来,新娘罗拉也完全站在父母这一边,阿克尔明显势单力薄。不过他并没有退缩下来,而是坚持自己的主张,当他所有的努力都不能改变罗拉顺从父母的意志时,他拿出了最正当的理由:"两天之前,你已经答应过舍弃你的父母,只跟我走。"这是一个丈夫不得不使用法律赋予他的权力。阿克尔和岳父之间的斗争,不仅是一般的家庭矛盾,而是新与旧不同观念的斗争,是贵族阶级与资产阶级之间、也是两代人之间的矛盾冲突。

当然,比昂逊不会像他的朋友易卜生塑造的戏剧人物那样,在矛盾冲突中主人公往往显得强硬,毫不妥协,比昂逊的人物往往是比较温和的,阿克尔"冒犯"岳父岳母的根本的目的是为了挽救自己的婚姻,他爱罗拉。他和岳丈一家的矛盾是一种心理上、意志上的角力。翁婿之间一句话是一句话的分量,各自防守得很严,双方对罗拉这个"千金宝贝"的争夺,说到底是一种爱的较量,加上法律不考虑年迈父母的感情,岳父母不得不尊重阿克尔的选择。在这个以男性为中心、以男性为话语权的社会里,可怜的罗拉内心尽管千般不舍她亲爱的父母、她熟悉的家,还是不得不跟着阿克尔搬走。那么,这对新婚夫妇到底会过得怎样?阿克尔带走了罗拉这个人能带走她的心吗?第一幕落幕时为观众带来了期待与悬念。

在第二幕里,观众看到的罗拉是不快活的,她像一只受了惊吓的小鹿,躲避着阿克尔,只有女友麦希尔德以给罗拉读书来打发她寂寞的时光。比昂逊戏剧充盈着音乐的节奏感。和第一幕戏一样,表面的宁静不久被打破,罗拉父母突然来到城里来看望他们日思夜想的女儿了。一向瞒着父母谎称自己一切都好的罗拉慌了神,阿卡尔也想以逃离的方式避开岳父岳母。不过,只要阿克尔一走,罗拉千方百计掩盖的生活真相就会暴露无遗。怎么办?阿克尔和罗拉都面临两难的选择,父母的到来给新婚夫妇出了一道难题。关键时刻,站出来一个在第一幕里被忽视的年轻女人—罗拉的闺中密友、也是阿克尔无话不谈的朋友麦希尔德,她劝阻了欲想出走的阿克尔。

全剧的高潮部分是令人感动的。阿克尔不得不向第一次登门的岳父岳母描述他们小夫妻俩的生活状态,他没有去虚构一个美丽的故事去欺骗双亲,而是真实地诉说这一年来他的生活感受。他坦白了新婚夫妇很少交流的事实,但这在阿克尔看来并不意味着两人不相爱,只是罗拉不善表达她隐藏的爱:"当我在自

己房里坐到夜深,为了她而工作的时候,她也在她自己房里坐着不睡——至少我常常觉得我听见她的脚步声;在我辛苦奔波,夜深回家的时候,如果她不跑出来欢迎我,这也并不是因为她缺少妻子对于丈夫的恩情——罗拉并不缺少这个,只是因为她不愿意泄露自己的喜悦,愿意等到我们重新和好那重大的一天"(比昂逊,《新婚的一对》45)。

阿克尔用自己的心去细细体味对方的一举一动,哪怕是一个轻轻的脚步声,这种对爱的"发现"是多么与众不同啊! 罗拉和她的父母,以及所有的观众都被深深打动了,罗拉情不自禁地伸出双手向阿克尔走去。如果说罗拉对丈夫把小家庭在装潢上有意模仿庄园老家的格局不曾做出过任何表示,现在听了阿克尔这一番倾诉,并跪在她面前说道:"为了我的缘故,使我能不再爱到惩罚——为了你自己的缘故,让你能重新按照你善良的心意那样,充实地生活吧——让我们现在就相爱起来吧!"(比昂逊,《新婚的一对》45)罗拉再也不能保持沉默了,她扑进丈夫的怀里,激动地哭泣起来,阿克尔的真情唤醒了小罗拉的爱,打开了她的心扉,新婚一对的心结解开了,整个屋子里弥漫着爱的气息。

罗拉终于以一个妻子的身份,请父母带着麦希尔德小姐出国,她要和丈夫阿克尔真正过两个人的世界。新婚的喜悦第一次像花儿一样在罗拉和阿克尔这对夫妇脸上绽开了花瓣。一个令人舒心的、美好的结局为这部戏剧揉进了优美而清新的气息,这种理想的境界是令人向往和感动的。男主人公阿克尔的宽容与善良,他的自食其力的独立意志,他的豁达与心细,是每一个少女、每一位女性所神往的。爱,在比昂逊笔下获得了升华和永恒。

在爱的光辉里,我们注意到剧中另一个善良、高贵的女性——麦希尔德小姐。麦希尔德既单纯又成熟,一开始她并不明白,阿克尔是通过自己来向罗拉发出他的爱慕之情,在与自己的对话中预演他对罗拉的求爱戏。这对同样年轻的未婚姑娘麦希尔德来说是残酷的,不公平的,她爱的心弦被阿克尔的表白所打动,直到后来才发现自己不过是个替代品,阿克尔爱上的是富家小姐罗拉。被忽视了的麦希尔德不能表白少女的心迹,只能不动声色地掩藏起来。可问题还不仅仅是这样简单,罗拉偏偏像一个长不大的孩子,喜欢依偎在父母膝下,于是麦希尔德又成为阿克尔倾诉苦恼的对象。麦希尔德在这种尴尬境遇的心情是复杂而痛苦的,受到内心伤害的她本可以抽身离去,或者冷淡甚至报复阿克尔,但是善良的麦希尔德没有这样做,她理性地选择了对所爱之人的"爱的奉献",要让阿克尔和罗拉真正收获甜蜜的爱情。她追随新婚夫妇来到城里,表面上她拒绝阿克尔的求助,暗地里却不露声色地帮助阿克尔,这就是她写了一本颇有"戏中戏"意味的书《新婚的一对》,以此激发出罗拉作为女人的嫉妒心。果然,罗拉的自我意识觉醒了,并终于赢得了爱情。麦希尔德一旦达到目的便抽身离去,她的行动暗示着麦希尔德是作家理想范式的代言人。麦希尔德是令人尊敬的,即便是她被罗拉误解的时候,她也不为自己辩解,更不夺人所爱。这种自我牺牲精神与真诚帮助他人的行为是高尚的,令人敬佩的。

在比昂逊的笔下,很少见到极端自私和冷酷无情的人物。在这场爱情故事里,一个至关重要的人就是男主人公阿克尔,没有他始终如一的爱,他和罗拉就不可能把爱情进行到底。许多中国观众都非常欣赏这位年轻人,欣赏他的独立担当的男子汉精神和爱的能力。娇生惯养的罗拉是成长在一个富有的、有较高社会地位的家庭里,用她父亲的话说连官爵也是送上门来的,不用你到官场上去拼搏去钻营。翁婿之间的关系可以用两个词来表现,这就是:恩惠与顺从,前者是施恩者,后者是被施恩者,只要还在这个古老刻板的家庭里,阿克尔只有顺从的份儿。作为一个男子汉,阿克尔拒绝这样的生活,在新婚第三天就不惜得罪高高在上的罗拉的父母,带着罗拉走向自食其力的新生活。但阿克尔把事情想简单了,一年过去了,他和罗拉的婚姻状态形同虚设。岳父母的造访更是对阿克尔的严峻考验。他退缩过,犹豫过,但最终还是面对现实,因为他对罗拉的爱是发自心底的,所以他能够用心去感受疏离的妻子所发出的每一个细微的动作,在细微深处感受罗拉的爱。阿克尔不依附权贵的自由意志,他的豁达与智慧,以及他的感受爱的能力,是比昂逊理想青年的楷模。该剧的艺术风格优雅而诗意,比昂逊比较注重场面的描写,注意动静结合,以及人与人之间矛盾的含蓄而内敛的表现。

二、"如果我们没有经过那些困苦的日子也就不会有这样幸福的一天。"

——华宝格

如果说《新婚的一对》是一首抒情的小夜曲,那么比昂逊另一部戏《破产》则是一首变奏曲,相对前者,《破产》所揭示的问题更加深刻。该剧中所涉及的金钱与人性的较量是许多戏剧家共同关注的问题,在金钱利益面前最能考验人的灵魂。比如,瑞士迪伦马特的《老妇还乡》、英国莎士比亚的《雅典的泰门》等。当前的全球性金融危机使得世界经济增长放慢,一些国家甚至濒临破产的境地。那么一个国家、一个企业一旦破产,将会发生什么?引起怎样的震动?"破产"也许是最能考验人与人之间的真实关系。比昂逊写于 1875 年的《破产》直至今天依然具有现实意义。

1875 年在斯德哥尔摩首演的四幕剧《破产》描写挪威某地头号大商人悌尔德破产前后发生的故事。靠着商业投机与欺诈手段发财的悌尔德以各种奢华的排场来掩盖破产的危机,但真相还是不可避免地被揭开了。这个先前在自己的好友破产时故意躲避并嘲笑他人的悌尔德,立即遭到朋友们的唾弃与羞辱。分崩离析、一败涂地之际,他的秘书桑尼斯用自己的钱挽救了败局,并留下来帮助悌尔德精心经营,最终使这个家庭摆脱了困境,同时也赢得了悌尔德的大女儿华宝格的爱情。

作为社会问题剧,《破产》证明了比昂逊作为一个现实主义作家对社会、政治观察的敏锐性,以及对商业欺诈行为的无情批判,该剧留给了我们很多思考。对悌尔德及其一家来说,破产,的确是场可怕的灾难,不仅危及到社会、危及到一

大批工人和他们的家庭的生存,而且全家人名誉扫地,一无所有,小女儿西妮小姐的未婚夫哈马副官当即就溜走了。在严峻的考验面前,大女儿华宝格欲离家去独立谋生,小女儿西妮只会惊慌失措地哭泣,绝望的悌尔德先生只想一死了之。这个时候,两个不引人瞩目的人站到了风口浪尖上,一个是悌尔德太太,另一个就是小职员桑尼斯。

悌尔德太太以母性的宽容、仁慈,成为这个家庭的精神支柱。她说:"等要离开我们的人都离开之后,剩下的就不会再离开我们了,我们剩下的东西也是别人不再能剥夺的了"(比昂逊,《破产》218)。这就是爱、宽恕与责任,这是悌尔德一家能够齐心协力,重整旗鼓的法宝。当灾难降临时,一向柔弱的悌尔德太太从容地从厨房里走了出来,始终没有一句抱怨丈夫的话,而是把自己的私房钱悄悄地放在悌尔德的箱子里,让他出去避风头的时候用。当工人们得不到工资要造反时,她当机立断,让悌尔德啤酒厂经理雅柯伯逊先生拿这笔钱去开支救急。这个看起来病泱泱的女人在丈夫破产的败局面前成为整个家庭的主心骨,她要求心高气傲的华宝格要有基督徒的爱心,"听凭上帝的旨意""原谅你们的爸爸吧,这是你们能够做的最大的好事"(比昂逊,《破产》220)。当华宝格说她要离家出走,并要求妹妹西妮也应该去自寻生路时,悌尔德太太表示她要和丈夫在一起,无论富贵还是贫穷。她的爱使饱受挫败的悌尔德深受感动,这个准备自杀的绝望中人终于有了重新生活下去的勇气。悌尔德太太内在的精神力量,感染了她周围的人,一如严寒冬日里一抹温暖的阳光。

桑尼斯则是物质上的援助,他拿出自己的全部积蓄来弥补悌尔德经济上的亏空,这无疑是让悌尔德绝处逢生。桑尼斯不过是悌尔德公司的小职员,却是一个知道感恩的年轻人,老板悌尔德曾手把手地教会他很多东西,他的忠心让悌尔德及其一家人如同刚跌入冰窟又如沐春风。当悌尔德破产的消息刚一宣布,有多少人来落井下石,桑尼斯这一雪中送炭的高尚举动无疑让悌尔德一家在世态炎凉中感受到了人与人之间的温情;其次,他这样做也是为了他心中的爱。桑尼斯一直默默喜欢华宝格,尽管他知道自己地位卑微,高傲的华宝格看不起他。本来,当这个家庭遭遇灭顶之灾时他甘愿留下来做出奉献与牺牲,用中国一句古话说就是"患难见真情"。然而,桑尼斯万万没有想到华宝格非但不领情,还侮辱他的动机。这时这个一向谦卑的小人物一下子激动起来,他挺起胸膛,指责华宝格的尖刻无情,还残酷地糟蹋了他生平所做的最快乐的一件事。桑尼斯知道华宝格一直嘲笑他一双发红的手,现在他勇敢地向她伸出双手,告诉她这是为她父亲忠心耿耿地工作而留下来的印记,"作为你父亲的女儿,您不应该为了这双手而嘲笑我!去求您的父亲向您伸出宽恕的手吧,而且应该紧紧地握住它,而不是在他遭遇不幸的当天就扔下他走掉!"(比昂逊,《破产》225)桑尼斯的这番话显示出他的人格魅力。这对自以为是的华宝格来说是个心灵的震撼,她第一次对他们家的打工仔桑尼斯刮目相看,决定让父亲接受桑尼斯的经济援助,并留下来帮助父亲一起重振家业。

和《新婚的一对》中的阿克尔有某种相似之处，桑尼斯也在他所处的家庭里地位低下，不过他们都有独立的自我和自由意志。相对阿克尔，桑尼斯显得更加谦卑更具有一种自我牺牲精神，他本来可以到国外亲戚那里谋到比现在高得多的职位，特别是在悌尔德破产之时，他离去另谋高职是理所当然的事情。但他选择了留下，选择了奉献，他用了三年时间改变了悌尔德一家衰败的命运，使他们在当地重新赢得社会地位；同时他也收获了华宝格的爱情和大家对他的尊敬。仁爱、宽恕、责任，在这一家人里获得了印证。比昂逊告诉我们，一个团结一致的家庭是不可征服的；一个有爱心的、知恩图报的人一定会有好结果的。“我从来没有遇见过比你更忠实的性格，更细致的头脑和更热诚的心”，“很久以来我就知道如果我能做这样一个人的妻子，我将引以自豪”（比昂逊，《破产》241），华宝格由衷地对桑尼斯说道。

在《破产》这部戏里，还有一个给人印象深刻的人物就是伯伦特律师。伯伦特律师做事严谨认真，终于职守，不徇私舞弊。他对悌尔德的虚张声势、弄虚作假明察秋毫；悌尔德千方百计想掩盖他破产的真相，伯伦特却防范严密，绝不让他溜走；悌尔德用哭泣、用跪地求饶、用赌咒发誓，以及用他的孩子和四百多个工人家庭都将吃不上饭为理由，苦苦哀求伯伦特律师能网开一面，但都不能打动他。走投无路的悌尔德先生狗急跳墙了，他使出了最后一招，从地上爬起来，锁上房门，掏出手枪，扬言要两人一起同归于尽。这个通过非法手段发财致富的资本家，耍起了无耻的流氓手段，以生命相威胁，逼伯伦特就范。

面对那阴森森的枪口，老辣的伯伦特律师表现得异常冷静，这是一场心理较量。伯伦特依旧彬彬有礼地规劝悌尔德拿出男子汉的气概来担当责任，他打破了走投无路的悌尔德最后一丝幻想，终于让他在破产文件上签了字，并在临走前请来悌尔德太太来陪伴她的丈夫，以防悲剧的发生。这场心理战打得漂亮，伯伦特律师是一个既坚持原则，又有仁者之心的人，他后来在社交场合表现出对悌尔德的信任，就等于帮助悌尔德重新取得人们的信任。难能可贵的是这位出入于上流社会的人物能够平等待人，对像桑尼斯这类社会地位卑微的人不抱有任何偏见，他真诚地祝福悌尔德夫妇选择了一个好女婿。比昂逊这最后的一笔，进一步丰满了这个人物。

通过《破产》这部戏剧比昂逊告诉我们，经济上的破产是可怕的，但更可怕的是人精神上的破产，只有仁爱、宽容与责任，才会在残缺中得到永恒。具有深厚人道主义精神和民主思想的比昂逊信仰人与人之间的平等与博爱，他所塑造的桑尼斯、悌尔德太太、阿克尔、麦希尔德等人物都是他思想与精神的传播者，他们追求独立的人格、做人的尊严与权力，这些高尚的品格，也是桑尼斯、阿克尔等赢得爱情的根本保证。

三、“总该有人先放开襟怀的。”——拉契尔

1903 年，比昂逊在给瑞典皇家科学院的致获奖答辞中有这么一句话：“在我

们的意识里,很少有别的成分像善恶观念那么重要,可以说,意识的主要作用就在于分辨善恶。"(比昂逊,《超越人力》1)他多次谈到善与恶,以及生命的意义,坚信赞颂高贵的美德是作家的职责。"人们要听的是赞美对工作、清新、节俭、慈善的热爱以及最重要的对人类的热爱,而不是去歌唱酩酊大醉和粗俗激情的欢愉。"(阿达利 99)相对于后现代戏剧家的作品,例如英国女作家萨拉·凯恩的"直面戏剧"中的残酷、绝望和痛苦的虚无主义,比昂逊的剧作要高尚、干净和纯粹得多。

比昂逊是属于 1848 年那个风起云涌的革命年代的挪威人。在欧洲民族主义革命思潮的影响下,挪威终于摆脱了从属地位而独立,从小农经济向工业革命发展。比昂逊生活在这样一个时代,他积极关注于民族独立与个人精神的独立,他后期戏剧创作超越了家庭问题,而转向社会矛盾,重要的作品有《超越人力》。这个剧本涉及到尖锐的劳资矛盾,被认为是世界文学史上第一部反应阶级斗争的现代戏剧。比昂逊以一个贫民女子马伦和她两个孩子的葬礼开始,揭露出挪威 19 世纪末叶严重的社会生态问题。那位亲手杀害自己的两个骨肉、随后自杀的年轻母亲以最宝贵的生命为代价,试图去唤醒在贫困线上苦苦挣扎的麻木的劳苦大众,以此反对贫富悬殊的不公平的现实社会。比昂逊以现实主义与象征手法相结合的手段,再现了工人阶级的绝望和大资本家的顽固无情,主张给予工人群众以较好的人的生存权力,包括居住条件的改善等。剧中多次出现了比昂逊戏剧里少见的群众性场面,如穷人的葬礼、劳资谈判、资本家大会,等等。全剧出场的人物众多,包括穷人、富人、牧师、外来者等不同身份的人,其中有名有姓的近 30 人,许多角色个性鲜明。

然而,比昂逊能够痛切地感受到阶级压迫,却不能真正诠释造成这种现象的根本原因,所以笔下呈现出理想主义的无政府状态。这场革命的领导人布雷德牧师要求人们做出"自我牺牲",提出"一个人必须准备为自己的信仰牺牲生命",只有这样才能"把全国工人从绝境中拯救出来,使他们脱离黑暗与阴湿,过着有阳光、有欢乐的生活,永远永远!"(比昂逊,《破产》11)结果在他的鼓动下,年轻贫穷的女工马伦,以及富有、充满青春热情的艾理亚斯为他们的信仰,为了拯救大众而献出了自己宝贵的生命。其实,他们都是非常单纯的人,马伦在杀害她的孩子之前,先把自己灌醉再采取"美狄亚式"的行动。有着虔诚宗教信仰的艾理亚斯则在政治上很不成熟,他天真地以为只有做出自我牺牲,采取震惊世界的手段,必然会引起全国上下的震动与关注,从而唤醒那些资本家们的良心,拯救更多的人,改变穷人们的处境,他深信用暴力能够创造奇迹。在实施他的炸毁城堡计划之前,他曾不留姓名地捐出了自己所有钱财周济那些穷人。艾理亚斯相信自己的选择是一个伟大的抱负,从而变得非常激进,同时又对此感到有点疑惑,他最后来向他唯一的亲人、孪生妹妹拉契尔道别时,连说了两遍"力不从心"、"力不从心",以至于拉契尔对他非常担心,试图把他带回美丽祥和的家乡去。这位殉道者和个人英雄最后行动的结果是葬送了自己连同城堡里一大群来

自全国大大小小的资本家、工厂主的生命。

艾理亚斯与拉契尔兄妹继承了美国姑妈的一大笔遗产,本可以在自己的家乡过着非常悠闲、舒适的田园生活。然而,自从他们来到峡谷边缘的黑尔镇之后,一切都改变了,劳工们的精神领袖布鲁德牧师后悔自己引导艾理亚斯走上了这条不归之路,"像他那种性情的人,我实在不应该把他牵扯进这场纠纷里"(比昂逊,《破产》35)。因为连布鲁德牧师自己也认识到他所宣言的拯救世界的理想"根本就不牢靠,我们只追求子虚乌有、茫无边际的东西"(比昂逊,《破产》35)。这使他对艾理亚斯的死负有愧疚心理。

善良的拉契尔在出事之后一直不能理解她最心爱的哥哥的做法,这使她非常痛苦。在她看来艾理亚斯生前"处处为别人着想,甚至为别人拼掉了性命!"(比昂逊,《破产》56)她并不怀疑艾理亚斯的动机是高尚的,但是她质疑这种毁灭性的暴力行动,"我不相信凭这种观念可以拯救什么人!我倒担心,人还没有救到就先被毁灭!这种做法不过是以更大的罪恶去抑制罪恶而已!"(比昂逊,《破产》56)"如果引发炸药的做法是善的,那炸药炸开以后,善的又怎么样?恶的又怎么样?善的最高本质应该是创造,或给人快乐、给人力量、给人意志,哪里是把宝贵的生命葬送掉呢?"(比昂逊,《破产》58)

拉契尔小姐的疑虑是耐人寻味的,这也是比昂逊的政治态度,即反对艾理亚斯的暴力主张。在这场你死我活的阶级斗争中,艾理亚斯用恐怖手段完成了他的理想抱负,为信仰为解放工人阶级而牺牲自己。然而,最后的结局却是令人讽刺的:全剧中最大的资本家、也是这场发生在黑尔小镇工人运动最大的对立面霍格先生却死里逃生,成为这场城堡爆炸案的唯一幸存者;救治他的不是别人,恰恰就是这场爆炸案的主谋与执行者艾理亚斯的妹妹拉契尔。霍格和拉契尔相遇在拉契尔创办的医院花园里,而这座花园正是霍格先生先前无偿赠送予她的,曾令艾理亚斯很反感。就在这座花园里,霍格亲口告诉拉契尔她哥哥不是被炸死的,而是他开枪打死了艾理亚斯,因为"他告诉我们,说他有引爆地下矿脉的信号。"艾理亚斯中枪以后还说"有意思,有意思",并念着拉契尔的名字。当霍格问震惊万分的拉契尔"你会不会赶我走"时,拉契尔泪流满面地跪了下来,回答他"不会!"

比昂逊宽恕的结局又在这部戏里呈现,比昂逊精神也在这次灾难中再次升腾起和平的梦想:先前与大资本家霍格剑拔弩张的两位罢工工人代表此时随着霍格边走边谈,看不出一丝对立的情绪;霍格先生的儿子、也参与这场暗杀活动的赫尔登,则把宽恕待人的拉契尔当作圣人顶礼膜拜;本来具有号召力的工人运动领袖布雷德牧师现在却变得神经恍惚,产生出幻觉;霍格先生还将他的侄子侄女克雷多、史佩拉兄妹送回给拉契尔,满足了拉契尔最大的心愿;于是快乐的拉契尔不再为哥哥艾理亚斯的死伤心落泪,她提出马上去向霍格先生道谢,并"请他探望一下工人。总该有人先放开襟怀的"(比昂逊,《破产》65)。

这真实可信吗?这样的结局太令人惊诧了,艾理亚斯若是地下有灵不知会

有何感想。这正如德国共产党创始人之一、著名国际妇女运动领袖克莱拉·蔡特金(Clara Zetkin,1857－1933)一针见血所指出的,比昂逊虽然痛切感受到阶级压迫和斗争,并有能力表现真实的现实生活,但由于作者生活环境狭隘、世界观的落后,使创作迷失方向,最后只好求助于虚无缥缈的宗教神明,而不能塑造出能领导群众消灭阶级压迫的英雄人物。[1] 在一场人为的爆炸案致使一群资本家、企业主命丧黄泉后,比昂逊虽不乏对人类未来的思考,对宇宙宏观的思考,但毕竟对立阶级的矛盾冲突的化解显得过于突兀,这种祥和的氛围缺乏一点真实性。

我相信,出生于挪威北部克维尼一个牧师家庭的比昂逊,由于从小经受基督教文化的熏陶,他坚信仁慈与爱人,只有像拉契尔这样的社会慈善事业才能化解阶级矛盾,让社会变革与进步。因此,出现《超越人力》这样的结局是很自然的事情。我注意到一个现象,这就是后现代主义者整体加以拒绝的人本主义,正是比昂逊先生所竭力提倡的。从伦理学方面来看,人本主义"意味着应该给予人类同情和尊重的这样一种信仰"(伊格尔顿 146)。

作为挪威的良心——高贵的比昂逊坚信宽容与博爱。我再次翻开比昂逊在1903 年获诺贝尔文学奖时的致答辞,咀嚼他说过的话:"如果生命中善的成分没有比恶的成分多,那么人类早就没有指望了。""我们在文学中追求的是一种有意义的生命,它虽然小如露珠,却可以在风雨中来去自如;有了这点精神,我们会处处心安理得;没有了它,我们会觉得怅然若失"(比昂逊,《超越人力》2)。昂逊强调一个作家的社会责任与担当,以及对理想的维护,这使我们对他肃然起敬。我感受到一个优秀的作家是人类前进的舵手,也许,"我们只有经验本身,直至在人生的困顿之中,在我们对快乐和失落的发现中,才能够学会如何去生活"(辛格 177)。

仁者爱人,使得比昂逊保持了一贯高贵而纯洁的赤子之心,写出了令我们憧憬的美的世界。"在美的艺术中,艺术本身并不是美,它之所以被称为美的艺术,是因为它产生美"(海德格尔 30－31)。比昂逊及其戏剧属于人类历史的过去、现在与未来,比昂逊精神将跨越时空在天地间回荡。

注解【Note】

1. 蔡特金对比昂逊的评价详见 http://baike.baidu.com/view/896285.htm。

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A Mind as Broad as the Ocean: A Few Thoughts on Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson's "The Ocean"

Sun Jian

Abstract As a lyrist, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson often expresses his strong feelings in his poetry about his love of nature, of Norway and of life. "The Ocean" is one of those typical poems in which he describes in emotional terms the vastness of the ocean and the courage of his people as "riders to the sea". From the vivid lines, we may find the unique characters of the country and the Norwegian people who never feel daunted in the presence of foes both natural and human. Death for them is only a pause in the whole process of being. A reading of the poem also reveals to the readers a sense of musical quality. This shows that Bjørnson cares much about the rhythms of the poem which help intensify the tension in the poem and vivify the turbulence and tumult of the ocean. Apart from the technical excellence, Bjørnson also displays his profound philosophical ideas about life and death and his mind moves with the undulating waves in the boundless ocean. The poem transmits to the readers a heroic note and a stoic attitude towards death.

Key words Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson; ocean; heroism; death

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As a great lyrist, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson is enormously popular among his readers in Norway. His poetry, together with his plays and novels, are well received in his country. One cannot but feel emotionally touched by his deep love that he has expressed in his poetry for nature, life and his own homeland. "The Ocean" is one of those typical poems in which the poet exhibits in emotional terms the vastness of the ocean and the courage of his people as "riders to the sea". From the vivid lines, we may discern the unique characters of the country and the Norwegian people who never feel daunted in the presence of foes both natural and human. Death for them is but a pause in the whole process of being, a starting point for regeneration.

The poem this article refers to comes from the collection *Poems and Songs* published by Bjørnson in 1870 and translated into English by Arthur Hubbell Palmer in 1915. The translator paid due attention to all the important details in the process of translation and faithfully kept the style and rhythm of the original poem.

The poems contains eight stanzas which are so divided that the description of the power of the ocean and the expression of the poet's thoughts about life and death alternate with the undulating waves of the ocean. The whole poem reminds the readers of the Viking period when the warriors fearlessly weathered the storm onboard the long-ships and confronted the hazards head-on with great courage, moving heaven and earth with their heroic deeds.

In the first stanza, the speaker begins by directly expressing his great longing for the ocean which rolls forward forever. He marvels at the grandeur and the persistence of the ocean and its enigmatic strength which urge him to set out on a journey with it. To eulogize the character of the ocean and its unyielding spirit, the speaker employs very expressive and descriptive lines to construct the image of the ocean as a person. "In nights of summer, in storms of winter, its surges murmur the self-same longing." These wonderful lines find an echo in the words of the great Chinese philosopher Confucius who stood alone by the riverside and sighed loudly seeing the water running non-stop to the distance. "The passage of time is just like the flow of water, which goes on day and night." The stanza clearly shows that Bjørnson's art is romantic and the imageries, the tone and the cadence may remind us of the poems by Shelley and other romantic poets. His love for Goethe's poems can well explain his own choice of a romantic style.

The speaker describes the ocean in the second stanza as a giant who "lifted its broad, cold forehead!" The shadow of the world and the ocean reflect each other, making a great contrast. The warmth of the sun brings joy to life while the ocean "ice-cold, changelessly melancholy, It drowns the sorrow and drowns the solace." The speaker, from his experience at sea, reveals another aspect of the ocean, dark, melancholy and even merciless, thus adding a sense of mystery to it. This makes people think of the sea in Nordic regions in the long winters and the depressing mood which goes with it.

The speaker continues his appreciation of the power of the ocean in the next stanza which shows his dexterous handling of the theme. The images of the moon, the tempest and the landscape help enlarge the poetic scope and the range of vision, contributing greatly to the intensity of the emotion and the gradually built-up tension which reaches its climax in the finishing stanzas.

The ocean roars past the lowland and the mountains with increased momentum and vigor, engulfing everything on its way to eternity. The speaker finds it hard to "interpret" the mystery of this great supernatural power but feels happy in its presence. It is better to be carried forward by the waves than to try to know the truth. Thus determined, the speaker wishes to move further out on the ocean to experience something he can never get on land, a journey on which he will have a chance to meet face to face with death. This urge is strongly felt in the fourth and fifth stanzas in the poem when the speaker talks about the "solemn sadness" without fear but with a sense of expectation. For him, this is a great lesson to learn and he will learn it the hard way. With an unfailing determination, the speaker decides to "prepare my spirit for death's dark dwelling." At this point, the speaker has turned from a person of desire to a person of action, ready to make his physical sacrifice in return for ever-last-

ing freedom of the soul.

The six stanza strikes a heroic and stoic note with a very happy and uplifting beginning when dawn comes and the speaker is in a very happy mood:

> Then comes day's dawning! My soul bounds upward
> On beams of light to the vault of heaven;
> My ship-steed sniffing its flank is laving
> With buoyant zest in the cooling billow.
> With song the sailor to masthead clambers
> To clear the sail that shall swell more freely,
> And thoughts are flying like birds aweary
> Round mast and yard-arm, but find no refuge …
> Yes, toward the ocean! To follow Vikar!
> To sail like him and to sink as he did,
> For great King Olaf the prow defending![1]

This stanza is marked off by a superb balance of both sound and sense. The use of alliteration in lines three, four, five and ten creates a sing-song like effect and the employment of expressions such as "day's dawning, beams of light, buoyant zest" and the metaphor "the vault of heaven" provides the readers with a rich poetic savor pleasant to the senses. The image of "thoughts flying like birds aweary" will no doubt please every reader with its originality and implication. And also the reference to the great heroes Vikar[2] and Olaf [3] in sagas as well as in history forms a picture which is epic in scope. It won't be an exaggeration to say that this stanza alone will meet the test of all great poetry.

The final moment or the climax comes when death overwhelms the ship and the sailor with its gigantic power of destruction. The ship is dismantled and the speaker/sailor is drowned. However the speaker is not unhappy about his lot because he has realized his dream of moving with the ocean to its eternity and he has reached the realm of sublimity of soul by stoically accepting his suffering and death.

The poem ends on the lines which, arguably, are very crucial to the interpretation of the sustaining theme underlying the whole poems. The speaker completes his monologue with a note of celebration because he solemnly declares:

> And I descend to eternal silence,
> While rolling billows my name bear shoreward
> In spacious nights 'neath the cloudless moonlight!

What the speaker indicates here is the age-long tradition of the Nordic culture which could be traced back to the days of the Vikings who viewed seafaring and death in a very special way as Magnusson explains:

> The Vikings represented an ideal of heroism and valor; young men went on Viking expeditions to prove their mettle. The Viking life was a sort of open-air uni-

> versity of the manly arts, something of every youngster to aspire to. (Magnusson 9)

This passage, in a way, could help interpret the speaker's desire and yearning in the poem for going out to the ocean in spite of the great danger lying ahead of him on his expedition.

Talking about death, Magnusson says, "The absolute finality of death was inevitable. Even the gods themselves had to face it. And in the end they would face it with the same stoicism, the same heroic fatalism, as the best of heroes. They had only one consolation, that is the 'verdict on each man dead'" which means a kind of fame written in words (Magnusson 29).

Magnusson's words best explain the last three lines of the poem. The reason why the speaker feels so calm and composed is that he is convinced that he will be remembered as the one whose heroic deeds certify his status as a descendant of the Vikings. So in a way this poem is very much like an allegory of the Vikings and the Nordic tradition which was carried forward by the Nordic people in modern times and, in Norway's case, by Fridtjof Nansen and his crew on board the ship *Fram*.[4] There is obviously a link between the poem and the tradition.

Bjørnson is noted for his technical excellence for his poetry as a lyrist. He is sensitive to music. There is music in "The Ocean" and Bjørnson cares much about the rhythms of the poem which help intensify the tension in the poem and vivify the turbulence and tumult of the ocean. We need to have a prepared ear for his lines, slowly appreciating the subtle and rich musical quality of the rhymes. It is known to all that the rhythm is the essential part of good poetry because "Poetry is different from prose as an art form. The difference lies in the fact that a poem can be best appreciated when it is read aloud. The stress on syllables in reading can stimulate a strong emotion which in turn produces some wonderful artistic effects" (Nie 27). Bjørnson knows the difference very well and what he achieves with "The Ocean" is that he adroitly manipulates the sound, pause, pace, and figure to get a special effect, combining the description of nature with serious musings on the matter of life and death and unfolds a poetic landscape with subtle and complex qualities.

In reading the poem, one never loses the voice of the poet whose character is strongly felt in the expression of the speaker "I". The poem could be read as an ode, a monologue, a confession, a self-statement and an allegory and it is many-faceted. Whatever happens, the self and the personality of the poet exist intensely there, making a poem personal and unique. "Writers use poems to engage their own mental processes so fully they can even lose all sense of themselves as such" (Holland 3).

There are two weather-beaten statues at the front gate of the grand National Theatre in Oslo. They are Ibsen and Bjørnson, the two literary giants standing there as two pillars in modern Norwegian literature. It is arguably true that Bjørnson fails to beat Ibsen as a dramatist because the latter is more powerful in his relentless exposure of the hypocrisy of the moral principles in a capitalist society. But we should do Bjørnson justice by saying that he is the most popular writer among people in Norway and his works, and his poetry in particular, fully demonstrate his talent and genius as

a great writer.

When talking about why the Nobel Committee decided to give Bjørnson the Nobel Prize for Literature by rejecting Ibsen and Brandes, Toril Moi says: "Bjørnson, on the other hand, was lauded for his poetry, his freshness of spirit, and above all for his positive and pure idealism in works nobody, not even in Norway, reads anymore (Moi 98).

Moi is quite right to point out the strong attraction of Bjørnson by referring to his poetry and his freshness of spirit, but probably she is not that accurate to say Bjørnson is buried in oblivion. At least, his "The Ocean" is still worth reading.

【Notes】

1. The poem referred to in this article is taken from Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, *Poems and Songs*. Trans. Arthur Hubbell Palmer (Oxford University Press 1915).
2. Víkar was a legendary Norwegian king who courageously sacrificed his life for the becalmed ships.
3. Olaf Tryggvason was King of Norway from 995 to 1000. He jumped from his great ship the "Long Serpent" into the sea and disappeared during the Battle of Swold.
4. Fram ("Forward") is a ship that was used in expeditions of the Arctic and Antarctic regions by the Norwegian explorers Fridtjof Nansen and others.

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作为希望现象的奇迹和暴力

——论比昂逊与《超越人力》

黄凤祝

内容摘要 《超越人力》(*Beyond Our Power*)第一部(1883)和第二部(1895)是挪威剧作家比昂逊(Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson,1832－1910)两部有争议的戏剧,也是他最重要的作品。通过这两部作品,他要告诉读者和观众的是:在奇迹不能出现的年代,痛苦带给人们的总是绝望,而绝望启发暴力,并期待以暴力来创造奇迹。于是,社会暴力带来了革命,使一部分人改变了命运,然而,却无法彻底改变社会大众的生活状态,使其摆脱贫困或痛苦。因此,奇迹和暴力改变不了社会,只有慈善事业和社会进化才能给人类带来福祉。与此同时,比昂逊在剧中将自由主义、资本主义、社会主义、无政府主义和恐怖主义的斗争搬上舞台,使资本家、工人、革命者一一出笼,和盘托出他对"主义"的批判。

关键词 奇迹 信仰 暴力 救世 希望

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Title Miracle and Violence as Phenomena of Hope and Happiness: On Bjørnson and *Beyond Our Power*

Abstract *Beyond Our Power Part I* (1883) and *Part II* (1895), two controversial plays of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson (1832－1910), are his most important works. In the two plays, what Bjørnson attempts to tell the audience is that the difficulties and pains always brought about the desperation to people in the years which were absent of miracle and the desperation was bound to evoke the violence which was expected to create miracle; as a result, the social violence brought about the revolution which had changed the destiny of some people while it could not entirely change the living conditions of the social mass and enable them to shake off poverty and suffering. Therefore, miracles and violence can not change the society; however, only charities and social evolutions can bring about the happiness for mankind. Meanwhile, Bjørnson brings onto the stage liberalism, capitalism, socialism, anarchism and terrorism to represent the capitalists, workers, revolutionaries. Hence, his criticism towards isms

(doctrine) has been revealed completely.

Key words miracle; belief; violence; salvation; hope

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《超越人力》第一部和第二部是挪威剧作家比昂逊(Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson 1832-1910)创作的有争议的戏剧,也是最能反映其宗教、政治、社会意识和信仰的作品。该作品的第一部是比昂逊1883年完成的,直至1894年才在挪威进行首演,而后又于1899年在巴黎和丹麦相继被搬上舞台。而距离第一部完笔十二年,即1895年,第二部方才问世。比昂逊通过这两部同名且在内容上具承继关系的戏剧展现了一个基督教牧师家庭两代人救世意识的转变和异同,读者和观众由此可窥见作家曾在精神世界历经的信仰危机,以及他逐步成为宗教批判者与和平救世者的心灵历程。

一、奇迹与信仰

在《超越人力》第一部中,故事主要围绕商牧师(Adolf Sang)和商太太(Klara Sang)展开。商牧师是一个虔诚的基督徒,对基督神力的坚定信仰,使他成为闻名远近的上帝使者。对他来说,帮助他人是义不容辞的事情,也是见证上帝存在的事业。在他的帮助下,病患得到康复,植物世界和动物世界欣欣向荣。甚至由于他的祈祷,人对自然灾害的恐惧也会消失。而他只有对自己的太太无动于衷。商太太因为精神紧张,患有失眠和瘫痪,但商牧师从未尝试过用祈祷和冥想启动奇迹来为她治疗。这是一个聪明的做法,因为商太太对奇迹存在怀疑,对丈夫的作风也抱着批判的态度(Bjørnson 27),而这种态度会妨害奇迹的出现。商太太批评丈夫说:"他缺乏真实感——他只看到他所要看到的事物,却从来看不见人性中存在的恶"。用她的话说,"他看到了,却有意地忽略它"(Bjørnson 27)。在商太太的妹妹从美国赶来探望姐姐期间,商牧师终于决定用祈祷促成奇迹出现来治疗太太的病。这个计划吸引了许多好奇的教徒和神职人员前来观看。在此,比昂逊将故事推向了高峰——众人在信仰和怀疑、害怕和希望、好奇和严肃相互掺杂的复杂心理状态下静观奇迹的出现,而商太太终于在众目睽睽之下站起来走到房中间。商牧师喜出望外地拥抱站起来的太太,可是,这一刻,人力和神力的交汇却无法支撑奇迹的显现,故事在这里完满地结束——商太太死在丈夫的怀中;商牧师把太太摊在地上,重复地呼喊着:"本来不应当是这样的"!(Bjørnson 57)紧接着,他也跟着倒了下去。商氏夫妇就这样在奇迹的失败中莫名殒命。

“水变成酒”和“病人在耶稣的召唤下康复”都是《新约》中描绘的奇迹。基督教义是否应建立在奇迹的信仰上,是一个可争议的问题。在天主教中,一个人成为圣人的标准是看他是否能促成奇迹出现。若能证实某“圣人候选人”曾经显灵,并促成某些奇迹,教会便会授予他“圣人”的称号。而比昂逊认为,基督教的信仰不应建立在相信奇迹和迷信奇迹上,而应建立在信仰上帝的律法和进化上。世俗生活是比昂逊意识关注的中心,但是上帝在他的世界观中依然占有重要的位置(Bjørnson 18)。在《超越人力》第二部中,比昂逊借艾理亚斯(Elias)之口说出他对上帝的理解:上帝代表宇宙间永恒的秩序,对人而言,这种秩序意味着正义。在战争中,人不能置正义而不顾,人必须牺牲自己,去摧毁邪恶的战争(比昂逊,13)。在此,比昂逊将社会改革视为战争。

二、暴力与救世

《超越人力》第二部 ,叙述的是商牧师去世后,商氏孪生兄妹哥哥艾理亚斯(Elias Sang)和妹妹拉契儿(Rachel Sang)的故事。这出戏与第一部基本上是各自独立的,情节上并不相互依赖和关联,只是在救世理念上是贯通的,且受到基督教救世意识的规范。

基督教和犹太教都认为人与生俱来就带有原罪,但是商牧师却坚信和肯定人善良的一面——他为了拯救别人,不惜牺牲自己,甚至超越自身能力之外祈望信仰为他人带来奇迹,并帮助他们脱离一切的病痛。第二部中的主人公商氏孪生兄妹受到了父亲救世意识的影响:拉契儿把姨妈留给她的遗产用来办慈善医院,而艾理亚斯则把遗产用以周济穷人,不过,他要拯救的不是个别的穷人或病人,而是贫困的众生。艾理亚斯献身于社会政治活动,热衷为穷苦大众争取利益。他的革命社会主义世界观,承续了父亲的宗教狂热。起初,艾理亚斯和劳工牧师布雷德(Bratt)一起为改善工人生活条件组织罢工,为穷困的产业工人争取利益。慢慢地,他变得越来越激进,以至于达到令拉契儿和布雷德都为他担心的程度。在这贫困的小镇上,大家都祈望着有一天奇迹会降临。但在罢工的斗争中,饥饿把穷人推向绝望。他们除了体验死亡以外,根本寻找不到其他任何能脱离这个贫穷世界的力量。社会改革是大众价值规范的实践。在“关于费尔巴哈的提纲”第十一条中,马克思指出:“哲学家只是用不同的方式解析世界,问题在于改变世界”(16)。在《超越人力》第二部中,艾理亚斯不要做马克思所说的那种仅是解析世界的哲学家,而要做革命的实践者,并要用暴力改变这个世界和创造奇迹。

1831 年到 1871 年这个时期的无产阶级深信:他们的任务是与资本家合作完成 1789 年革命未未竟的事业,即从里昂起义到巴黎公社这一时期的历史任务。但是这一点从未得到资产阶级的认同——自法国大革命以来,资本家就开始反对无产阶级的社会权利。凡尔赛临时政府和普鲁士军队联手摧毁了巴黎公社(1871),也最终粉碎了无产者的这种幻觉(本雅明 27 – 28)。

在巴黎公社覆灭之后二十四年,比昂逊创作了《超越人力》第二部。全剧从一个女工及其孩子的葬礼开场,谕示了对和平斗争的绝望。罢工的斗争使工人的生活更加绝望。资本家不妥协,而工人没有工资,生活便难以为继。女工马伦在饥饿与绝望的迫使下杀死自己的两个孩子后自杀。比昂逊在剧中写道,"先杀孩子,再自杀,真像希腊悲剧里的美狄亚"(比昂逊 2)。马伦之死,激化了艾理亚斯的意识。马伦死前说:"若没有人敢于殉身,他们(资本家)永远不把我们当一回事"(比昂逊 11)。艾理亚斯接受了马伦的这种观念:牺牲自己去摧毁邪恶的战争(比昂逊,11)。于是,他成了"恐怖分子",在资本家会议上扮成服务生,引爆了事先在会议厅地下室中埋下的炸药,与资本家们同归与尽。

比昂逊在《超越人力》中宣扬的是救世思想。他主张采用非暴力的手段为正义牺牲自我,试图通过戏剧作品来感化大众。在《超越人力》第二部中,他表露出对拉契儿慈善主义的同情和对艾理亚斯暴力主张的批判,并将自由主义、资本主义、社会主义、无政府主义和恐怖主义的斗争搬上舞台,使资本家、工人、革命者一一出笼,和盘托出他对"主义"的批判。

工业革命在十九世纪的欧洲引发了严重的社会问题。资本家和工人的冲突日益尖锐,逐步演变为武力斗争。比昂逊反对暴力,主张社会进化和改革是解决劳资冲突的唯一出路。在剧中,他指出,在斗争中,资本家、工人或激进分子不会得到利益,只有拉契儿式的社会活动才是未来的希望。因此,在《超越人力》第二部剧终时,比昂逊借拉契儿之口说:"总得有人先放开襟怀,学会原谅他人"(比昂逊 65)。拉契儿希望未被她哥哥炸死的最后一个资本家霍格(Holger)(他曾经把自己的房产捐给拉契儿作为慈善医院的用地)学会原谅工人,并请求他去探望工人。这是拉契儿的寄望,其实也是比昂逊对资本家的恳求。

三、救世主义的失败

比昂逊一生为两个理想(关于人类幸福)而奋斗:追求世界和平、致力于建立欧洲民族联盟。十九世纪欧洲民族国家兴起,彼此之间争战不断。而这些国家其实均属于同一日尔曼族。比昂逊主张泛日尔曼主义,认为欧洲民族联盟不应建立在武力征服上,而应以自愿加盟为原则(比昂逊 14)。

比昂逊在第二部作品中,已痛切感受到当时的社会斗争和阶级剥削,但他却无力提出解决社会压迫和斗争的具体方案。在作品中,他虽然深刻地揭示了现实生活的残酷,但他所处的生活环境以及坚持启蒙主义的意识心态,使得他的创作堕入虚无缥缈的信仰中,即希望借助宗教神明的道德力量来改变这个世界。因此,他不可能塑造出能领导群众、消灭剥削的英雄人物。

比昂逊认为,不讲究宣传的文学作品,常常是最诚恳和认真的。一个作家愈是嚷着要精神解放,其作品愈是流于煽动。在比昂逊的意识中,文学创作不可无顾道德良心,而善恶的观念是其中最重要的环节。他认为,在人的生命中,善的成分比恶的多些,人类因此才有指望。比昂逊把文学作品看作意识形态战争的

武器,认为作家在正义感的引导下前进,并凭藉这个信念来引导战争。因此,他在评论莎士比亚时说:“对他而言,世界是座大战场,他仗着诗人的正义感、仗着无限的生命潜力以及自己崇高无比的生命信念来引导这场战争”(比昂逊 2)。比昂逊同时相信,人类被一种不可抗拒的力量所鼓舞,通过直觉(潜意识)、意识和想象力被不断推进向前。想像力是进步的力量,人类可以藉此预测前进的方向。

自以为是的现代人千方百计地想办法摆脱对资产的依赖。然而,它是人类千百年来生活的凭藉,人类终归是无法摆脱对它的依赖的。在这点上,比昂逊始终主张财产私有制,反对社会主义财产公有制。

结语

在《超越人力》第一部中,商牧师为帮助病人脱离病痛,用祈祷和信仰来启动奇迹,而比昂逊对迷信奇迹提出了批判。他认为,基督教的信仰不应建立在相信没有法则的奇迹上,而应建立在信仰上帝的律法和进化上。

在《超越人力》第二部中,商氏兄妹艾理亚斯和拉契儿的故事展现了现代阶级斗争。剧本中,比昂逊通过对拉契儿慈善主义的同情以及对艾理亚斯暴力主张的批判告诉读者和观众:在奇迹不能出现的年代,痛苦带给人们的总是绝望,而绝望启发暴力,并期待以暴力来创造奇迹。于是,社会暴力带来了革命,使一部分人改变了命运,然而,却无法彻底改变社会大众的生活状态,使其摆脱贫困或痛苦。因此,奇迹和暴力改变不了社会,只有慈善事业和社会进化才能带来人类的幸福。

希望,能使人暂时脱离困难和痛苦。希望的第一个现象,是希望存在一个高于人类和超越人力的神力(上帝),作为救苦解难的最高机制。这种祈望想通过信仰和祷告来启发奇迹,是一种和平与迷信的生活实践。

自从尼采宣布上帝已经死亡之后,他提出:人应主宰自己的命运,摧毁基督教的信仰,重新评估一切价值。人作为超人,完全有能力自己创造奇迹。法国大革命和巴黎公社显示了群众暴力的力量。暴力,虽不是祷告,却代替了上帝,成为创造奇迹的力量。当时工人的呼声从巴黎公社、德国的工人暴动一直响彻俄国的十月革命,就是人民信仰暴力能创造奇迹的结果。

比昂逊将希望分成三个层次,即迷信、革命和救世的仁慈。迷信用祷告无法启动奇迹;暴力和革命无法改变这个世界;而慈善主义和人道主义,必须依靠资本的力量才能贯彻。然而,资本主义追求的是最大的利润,所以,依靠人善良的意愿来拯救世界只能是一种梦想。因此,慈善主义同样无法带来社会的奇迹。

《超越人力》第一部叙述的是信仰启动奇迹的失败以及人迷信奇迹的失败,由此,作者对基督教神秘主义信仰提出质疑,而对基督教救世主义充满祈望。《超越人力》第二部是作者对社会暴力的否定,即对恐怖主义行动提出质疑,藉此说明用暴力催生奇迹终究是失败的。作者自认是一个启蒙和理性主义者,肯

定慈善主义是救世的唯一希望。但他的观点并没有得到同时代人的认同:资本家和工人都不会同意他的主张,劳资斗争也不会因慈善事业和社会进步而结束。

比昂逊是1903年诺贝尔文学奖的得主,但是他的作品,在他逝世一百年后今天的国际环境中,并不为人所重视,研究他作品的人也不多。以德国为例:在德国大多数书店中,除了他的诗集外,看不到他的其他作品;在德国的图书馆里,有关他的书也不易找到。而在中国,《超越人力》唯有第二部得到了译介。比昂逊如果知道的话,定会感到寂寞。

注解【Notes】

1. 在1903年诺贝尔文学奖的颁奖辞中,没有提及这两部作品。参看:颁奖辞,《诺贝尔文学奖文集》,第2页。
2. 这是第一部描写现代阶级斗争的戏剧。

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For a First Glance at Estonian Literature

Jüri Talvet

It seems clear that at the start of the 21st century the world of letters is oriented by mainstream phenomena whose source mechanisms are Western economic and political centers. Little if any attention is paid to literatures of the vast periphery which includes literary creation not only by tiny nations such as Estonia (located on the shores of the Baltic Sea, and with a population of scarcely a million people), but also by much bigger communities, especially of what has traditionally been called the third world.

However, in the world cultural process, classifications like first, second, and third have no real value. If we apply them, we only demonstrate our great cultural ignorance. Peripheral cultures in which contact with nature / the biosphere is inalienable, always provide room for sudden creative explosions?. To a greater extent than centres, the world's immense periphery has characteristics of the semiosphere, an ideal space for artistic creation imagined in the late work of Yuri M. Lotman (1922 – 1993), the renowned semiotic philosopher who himself spent the greater part of his lifetime in the dark European periphery. He taught (mainly Russian literary history) for more than forty years at the University of Tartu, in an Estonia which in those times as part of the Soviet Union could not project any visible identity as a state, nation, and culture in the eyes of the wider world.

Yet the world is in constant change. Though the delay has been long, some historical injustices done to peripheral cultures are being remedied. The canon of world literature is sporadically modified and expanded, depending in the first place on new talented translations of the works, in parallel with philosophically minded criticism, capable of illuminating a work differently than in the past. Thus, one of the greatest Estonians of all time, Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald (1803 – 1882), the son of serfs, spent forty years of his life as a medical doctor, curing simple village people in a tiny provincial Southern-Estonian town. Despite acting in an even more obscure periphery than Lotman, Kreutzwald created an epic in twenty songs, *Kalevipoeg* (1861), a vigorous testament to the ideal of his people's freedom. It became the founding work of Estonian literature, both in the philosophical and aesthetic dimension. In the year 2004 a complete French translation of *Kalevipoeg* was published in Paris by Gallimard, and a second complete English translation of the work is to appear soon. Literary criticism, too, is gradually overcoming the exaggerated postmodern fear of grand narratives and entering a constructive phase of refreshing new comparative interpretations of the literary works of the past. Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg*, which by today has become a stem text of the Estonian nation, has a place in such interpretations, with the huge number of intertextualities departing from it and running

through the cultural creation of posterity.

However, one should not idealize the potential contribution of smaller cultures to the canon of world literature. It is also true that a significant part of the literary creation and the literary criticism from the vast cultural area remaining outside the dominant international languages (English, French, German, Spanish) follows the example of the fashions originated in the centres. The imitative principle is even more visible in the field of literary criticism, in which very few scholars outside the centres reveal a capacity for independent thinking and elucidating phenomena from the viewpoint of their own existential situation, of historical cultures beyond the mainstream patterns.

For that reason, comparative literary studies are more important than ever. In Estonia, we publish in Tartu since 1995 *Interlitteraria*, an annual international journal for comparative literary studies. Over the years it has dedicated significant space to literatures of the peripheral and border areas of Europe as well as other parts of the world. The aim is to establish a mutually enriching dialogue between centres and peripheries and attempt to shed light on the literary processes taking place beyond the mainstream.

We welcome an analogous initiative coming from one of the greatest Asian cultural centres, China, as embodied by *Forum for World Literature Studies*. Responding thankfully to its offer to give in its pages a short introduction to Estonian literature, instead of providing regular overviews of the main genres of literary creation, we have preferred to centre the following articles on poetry and literary reception. Even though postmodern literary scholarship has driven poetry to the periphery of its interests, it is probably still the core of all literary creation of any nation, as well as the main source of originality, in view of the fact that, more than other genres, it is deeply involved in the natural language, the mother tongue of a nation. In my own essay I try to characterize the historical origins of Estonian poetry and present-day poetic developments. My younger colleagues Lauri Pilter and Katre Talviste, in their respective articles, review attempts to project Estonian poetry into the currently most important international language, English, and show how the literature of the most stable and vital Western cultural centre, France, has been received in Estonian culture and literature.

Estonian Poetry: The Seduction and the Toil of Thinking in Rhymes

Jüri Talvet

Abstract Estonian poetry is still very little known outside Estonia or the community and the diaspora of Estonians abroad. In part, it is because literatures of smaller nations, created in their national languages, on the whole tend to be neglected by the mainstream of world literature, which relies on literary creation in major international languages. However, trans-cultural dynamics in poetry has its specific difficulties. They are very much present in the case of Estonian poetry, which during the scarce two hundred years of its existence has predominantly resorted to end-rhymed stanzas, by no means easily achieved in the Estonian language itself.

Key words historical and comparative poetics; Estonian poetry; Western poetry; rhyme problems; philosophy; translation

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In his "Foreword" to *On the Way Home: An Anthology of Contemporary Estonian Poetry* (2006) Mohit K. Ray, a renowned Indian literary scholar, claims that "[t]he poems in the anthology secure for Estonian poetry a permanent niche in the world poetry for their range and depth, richness and variety of form, as well as the substance and quality of the vision" (vi). The editor of the anthology, American poet and philosopher H. L. Hix, in his turn describing Estonia's poetry as "a little jewel" (4), has provided each of the thematic groups in his selection of the work of ten contemporary Estonian poets (Hando Runnel, Andres Ehin, Paul-Eerik Rummo, Jaan Kaplinski, Juhan Viiding, Ene Mihkelson, Jüri Talvet, Mari Vallisoo, Hasso Krull, Triin Soomets) with thoughtful meditations in the background of Estonian (cultural) history and the present day, including a number of inspiring parallels with American and British poetry.

Yet it must be admitted that the above-mentioned anthology is a rare exception to the wall of silence which generally faces attempts of smaller nations, working in minor languages, to project their poetry to the wider world. Even if such projections in the past have occasionally been materialized, they still reflect above all a wishful imagining from the "inside" of a small culture, according to which the world would immediately recognize the talent and stature of their native poets, once some translations into the major languages have appeared.

The reality looks much bleaker. As is well known, the major task-force of the present-day literary and cultural science has been attracted by more popular fields

than poetry. The small minority of international scholars still working in the poetic area are largely restricted to the poetic work created in major languages. Translations from minor languages are rare, not only because of the lack of interest on part of publishing houses and the extremely limited translating capacity. One must admit the historical fact that even poetry created in major languages – especially lyrical poetry and all poetry originally relying on strict metrical or rhyme patterns – has always been slow to transgress language barriers. The attempts to translate Dante Alighieri's *Divina commedia* into Estonian started quite early in the 20th century, but in the year 2011 the process still remains unconcluded. Of the total of 366 poems of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* by the year 2010 only a dozen had appeared in Estonian translation.

In the absence of critical reviews and discussion from "outside", from international comparative contexts, the canon of Estonian poetry has been constructed almost exclusively from "inside" Estonia. Especially in a small nation the canon-building has largely been dependent on the aesthetics and the ideology of a handful of influential writers and critics dominating the cultural scene. Thus at the start of 20th century, within the cultural movement "Young Estonia" (Noor-Eesti, 1905 – 1915) Friedebert Tuglas, a fiction writer and essayist (1886 – 1971), quite early established his strong authority, with a marked preference for symbolism and realism. Tuglas founded in 1923 the monthly literary journal *Looming*, which has been published almost without interruption since. With some fellow-members of "Young Estonia", like the linguist Johannes Aavik, Tuglas advocated poetry relying on controlled and regular rhythms and rhymes, as well as clarity of thought. Since the 1930s Ants Oras (1900 – 1982), a translator and critic, with his taste preferences oscillating between classicism and romanticism, not only was the main introducer of English literature (with his translations of Shakespeare's plays, the poetry of Shelley, Keats, Byron, etc.), but also contributed importantly to establishing the work of Marie Under and the poetic group "Arbujad" as an ideal model for Estonian poetry.

Under the spell of Oras's lavish dedication to these poets, the author of a recent bulky monograph of Marie Under's life and work, Sirje Kiin (referring to the opinion of Aleksander Aspel, another influential literary scholar who like Oras worked after the war in exile in the US) has claimed that Under meant for the common sensibility of the Estonians the same as Goethe for the Germans, Cervantes for Spaniards or Molière for the French (Kiin 5). Partly because in the first two postwar decades in the Soviet Estonia the poets of the "Arbujad" group were largely neglected, whereas Oras had become a persona non-grata, their work and opinions, as a kind of a counterweight, are still very much being veneered at the start of the 21st century, in the newly independent Estonian Republic. It is symptomatic that Oras's strong preference for rhymed poetry was not put into doubt from within Estonia itself, but was first questioned by Ivar Ivask, a poet and critic belonging to the younger generation of exiled Estonians. In a letter to Marie Under (1966) Ivask vividly manifests his disagreement with Oras: "Our greatest critic Ants Oras, however, declares that authentic poetry is and will always be the one created in regular verse meter and with end-rhymes!"[1] (Olesk 17).

A small country (45,000 square km) with an even smaller population (about a

million people) on the shores of the Baltic sea, Estonia has been for centuries an exemplary "borderland," open to all kinds of cultural influences from West (Germany), East (Russia), and North (Sweden, Finland). A direct Southern link has been less significant, since Estonians (like Finns, Hungarians and many smaller nationalities in the northern regions of the European part of Russia) speak a Finno-Ugrian language unrelated to the languages of the other East-Baltic nations, Latvia and Lithuania. However, Estonia does share its recent historical fate with the latter, since all three Baltic states, politically independent between the two world wars, were torn from the West by the joint action of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia. Thousands of Balts were forced to flee their home countries in the turmoil of the World War II, finding refuge in Sweden, the U. S. , Canada, and other Western states; of those who stayed, tens of thousands were deported by the communist regime to Siberian prison camps. From there, thousands never returned. After the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of the 1991, the three Baltic states regained their independence, and since then not only have been restored to the world political map, but are gradually (re-) emerging culturally into the consciousness of the outside world.

The cultural discovery of Estonia by the rest of Europe belongs, above all, to the late eighteenth century, and is mainly explicable in the background of German culture. Germans had been the principal landlords in the Baltic territories since the late Middle Ages, when Teutonic crusaders forced the Baltic people into Christianity and occupied their native lands. They continued as the lords, in practical terms, of the native Estonian peasant population even during the following short Swedish reign in the seventeenth century and the long Russian tsarist domination that started at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

German Lutheran clergymen learned the language of the peasant people, i. e. the Estonian (called by the peasants themselves *maakeel* or, the 'country tongue') and some of them, like Rainer Brockmann, even managed to write, as early as the start of the seventeenth century, verses in the autochthonous language, being influenced, in their turn, by such innovators in German poetry as Martin Opitz and Paul Fleming. That coincided with the foundation by the Swedish king Gustav Adolf II in Tartu (Dorpat) of the second oldest university in northeastern Europe. Brockmann wrote his poem "Carmen Alexandrinum Esthonicum" (1637), the first known poem in Estonian, in alexandrines, the verse pattern that was borrowed not long before by the Germans from the French. In the later Estonian poetic tradition, however, alexandrine verse has been seldom practiced.

At the start of the nineteenth century, when the Russian Emperor Alexander I, after wars, re-inaugurated the university in Tartu, Friedrich Maximilian Klinger, one of the leading figures of the German pre-Romantic "Sturm und Drang" movement — at that time a high-ranking military officer in St. Petersburg — was named a tutor for the university, while Kristian Jaak Peterson (1801 – 1822), being among the first native Estonian university students, praised in his poems the beauty of the Estonian language. Peterson, who like his coeval John Keats died unjustly young, is generally considered the first important native Estonian poet.

Peterson's verse is a curious phenomenon, especially against the background of

conservative rhymed poetry that since the second half of the 19th century, the so-called "national awakening" period, was overwhelmingly adopted by Estonian poets. Peterson was above all influenced by German pre-romantics, especially Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, who imitating ancient Greek verse patterns abandoned rhymes and centered his odes and hymns on the expression of religious-philosophic thoughts. The young Estonian Peterson created his poems often on pastoral themes, not numerous at all – including "The Moon" (Kuu), his best-known single poem, a vigorous praise of the Estonian language and a manifestation of the poet's faith in the future of his homeland. It claimed the cultural equality of all nations, great and small, thus directly expanding Johann Gottfried Herder's revolutionary-romantic cultural philosophy. [2]

The Moon

Doesn't the wellspring of the song
in the cold Nordic wind
soak the senses
of my people with its mist?

If here in the snowy North
a pleasant-smelling myrtle
in a windy valley
can beautifully bloom;
cannot, then, the native tongue
that like a quiet creek,
without knowing its beauty,
is running peacefully
across the meadow,
in the golden fire of the sky,
or with a sounding voice,
without knowing its might,
with the heaven's thunder,
when the sea is loudly calling:

cannot, then, the native tongue
rise in the wind of the song
to the heavens
and seek for it eternity?

Then I will sing to you,
the stars of a clear
blue sky, looking with joy
from the earth
to the high fatherland:

then I will sing to you,
king of the night, the moon!
You who in the lap of clouds,
like a flower from its bud
with a merry white face,
rise under the skies,
where hot stars
are falling to the earth
from before you
into the black and gloomy mist. –
Thus you, human spirit,

are swimming in the mist,
as your thought is seeking
God from below the stars. (Trans. J. Talvet and H. L. Hix)

Even though Estonian "cultured" poetry (as well as conscious literary creation, on the whole) is young, Estonians feel proud of having a great and extremely varied treasury of folksongs whose beginnings reach at least to the Middle Ages, if not to times long before the Christian era. Some examples, along with Latvian and Lithuanian folksongs, became known to Europe, as mediated by the main ideologist of the German Romanticism, Johann Gottfried Herder, in his influential book Stimmen der *Völker in Liedern* (1778/1779). No doubt Herder's "Baltic interests" derived from the fact that in 1764, as a young man, he worked as a pastor in the Latvian capital, Riga.

The role of that ancient lyric tradition, with its rhythms and poetic means considerably differing from the patterns of "learned" poetry that mainly derived from German culture, has in modern times remained somewhat ambiguous. It is true that Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald—the "Father of Song," as he is popularly called — created in twenty songs his national-heroic epic *Kalevipoeg* (1861), following the great example of the Finnish epic *Kalevala*, in the traditional Finno-Ugric folksong meter. That means abundant use of alliterations and final rhymes of archaic artificial suffixes, untranslatable into modern languages. Kreutzwald's epic has been echoed throughout later Estonian culture, but its wider (Western) reception has been slowed, on the one hand, by the translation difficulties and, on the other hand, by the negative opinion in some Estonian literary criticism, arrived at by contrasting *Kalevala*, as a genuine collection of Finnish traditional epic songs, to *Kalevipoeg*, as predominantly Kreutzwald's own poetic invention, though with borrowings from Estonian traditional songs and legends.

Despite the early grudge against Kreutzwald and his *Kalevipoeg* on part of such leading members of the "Young Estonia" group as Tuglas, Aavik and Ridala, and despite the continuing prejudice manifested above all by our folklorists, as well as parodic representations of *Kalevipoeg* in the work of some modern Estonian writers, the significance of Kreutzwald's epic is slowly but steadily emerging, as we have entered

the 21st century. Kreutzwald created his work in extremely difficult conditions, when Estonian literature and literary criticism did not yet exist. In the early international emergence of the work, the support coming from the "border" and "outside" was essential. Some Baltic-German academicians having their roots in Estonia (F. J. Wiedemann, F. A. Schiefner) proposed Kreutzwald's epic (published since 1857 by parts in *Verhandlungen der Gelehrten Estnischen Gesellschaft*) for the Demidov Prize of St. Petersburg's Academy of Sciences. The prize was indeed awarded to Kreutzwald when the publication of the work was not even concluded. From Finland, more support came. Sven Gabriel Elmgren, a Finnish intellectual, claimed generously in a speech in Helsinki (1859) that *Kalevipoeg* was equal to the Finnish epic *Kalevala* (1835 – 1849), by Elias Lönnrot.

The prize contributed importantly to *Kalevipoeg's* gradually gaining reputation in Estonia itself. Despite the political-ideological manipulations of the work amid the turmoil of different historical periods, already in the group of "Young Estonia" a split, as regards the interpretation of Kreutzwald's work, could be observed. Another leading member of "Young Estonia" along with Tuglas, the poet and literary scholar Gustav Suits wrote a detailed monograph on Kreutzwald's formation as an intellectual and a writer. From the 1930s *Kalevipoeg* became a life-long research topic for August Annist, a major folklorist and literary scholar, as well as the translator into Estonian of Lönnrot's *Kalevala* (1939), Homer's *Iliad* (1960) and *Odyssey* (1963), and Russian medieval anonymous *The Tale of Igor's Campaign* (1941). Annist's *opus magnum* on *Kalevipoeg*, comprising more than 900 pages, was published posthumously in 2005.[3]

Far from being a minor detail, *Kalevipoeg's* first full translation into French (by Antoine Chalvin) was published in 2004 by Gallimard, while the preparation of a second English translation is under way.[4] Among younger Estonian literary scholars, especially Marin Laak has fruitfully researched the vast complex of intertextualities reaching from Kreutzwald's Kalevipoeg through literature and all other branches of Estonian culture.[5]

Among other aspects of *Kalevipoeg*, I would accentuate the epic's lyrical quality, not as a drawback — as has been asserted by some Estonian folklorists — but as the main feature that makes Kreutzwald's work gain significance in the context of the crucially renewed modern discourse, since the spread of feminist consciousness. The hero's life journey is basically determined by his love for his mother Linda and the sense of guilt of having caused the death of the Island Maid. Kalevipoeg, in contrast to the prevailing belligerence of epic heroes of the past, defends peace and seeks to build a peaceful nation, a shelter for women, children and the old. To provide an idea of the work's lyrical tonality, with the characteristic folksong-like repetitions and parallelisms, below is a small fragment from the 7th Tale of *Kalevipoeg*, with the hero singing, in repentance of his evil deeds:

Where are the alder groves of grief?
The aspen groves of anguish?
The fir forests of sadness?

The birch groves of repentance?
Where I mourn, there grows an aspen grove,
where I despair, an alder grove,
where I am sad, fir forest grows,
in my regret I am sheltered by a birch grove!
Oh you my tender mother,
you who brought me up in love,
you who cradled me in your arms,
you who lulled me with your voice:
you who to die alone,
you had to fade without me near!
Who closed your eyelids,
who smoothed your brow?
A hepatica closed your eyes.
Bent grass covered your brow.
Oh my tender mother!
A hepatica has secret thorns,
bent grass has rough roots. (Trans. J. Talvet and H. L. Hix)

In few European nations has the awakening to a national conscience been so influenced by a woman poet as the Estonian awakening was by Lydia Koidula (1843 – 1886), the "Singer of the Dawn," whose poems, set to music, became immensely popular. They were and still are sung, and bring tears to people's eyes, at the traditional song festivals that gather choirs from all parts of Estonia. Under the Soviet regime, performances at festivals of songs like "My Homeland is My Love," based on Koidula's poems, were often turned into a major expression of popular opposition to the forcefully imposed communist rule. Koidula grew up in the German language environment. In her poetry she imitated the metric of German poetry, and some of her best-known poems are adaptations of German models. (Especially inspiring in those times was the work of Heinrich Heine; his bold liberal-mindedness was echoed in Estonia via numerous translations and adaptations. Among the first to translate Heine's poems was Koidula herself.)

Although Koidula is known first and foremost for her patriotic poems that manifest ardent opposition to the German hegemony and the serfdom Estonian people suffered for centuries, every Estonian also knows from childhood Koidula's lyrical-intimate poems, such as "The Mother's Heart" and "Home". In their simple but intense cordiality, they resemble the lyrical work of Koidula's contemporary poet Rosalía de Castro, in the other European "periphery", Galicia.

Home

How lovely it was to play
near the fence of our village street!
Where we the children ran,

with bent-grass reaching our knees.

Where I played until sunset
now with a flower, now with grass,
from where grandfather led us
by the hand to the house to sleep.

I wished I could look
like him over the fence:
"Wait, my child," he said, "that
time is quick to come!"

That time did come. On land
and at sea the eye could reach far;
yet no view was half so lovely
as there in the village street. (1865) (Trans. J. Talvet and H. L. Hix)

That exceptional woman, Lydia Koidula, also founded the Estonian professional theatre, by writing several plays. Also, under the title "The Last Inca of Peru" (1869) she adapted from German W. O. von Horn's story, providing for the Estonian indigenous people inspiring parallels for their opposition to serfdom, as manifested by the bold defender of the American indigenous people, Bartolomé de Las Casas, in the days of the European conquest of the New World.

During the next half century the patterns of syllabic-accentual verse, mainly of German origin, with less significant influences from the Russian and Scandinavian traditions, firmly rooted themselves in Estonian poetry. Deviations from that mainstream were rare. One of the happy exceptions originated from the unhappy life of Juhan Liiv (1864 – 1913), a poet of tragic and patriotic tonality who, like Friedrich H? lderlin a century earlier, wrote some of his deepest poetry on the verge of mental breakdown. Liiv did not try to resuscitate traditional Finno-Ugric verse, but he skillfully used some of its elements, — sometimes rhythms, sometimes word-endings. Liiv consciously opposed rigid rhymes and meters, adapting instead 4-line stanzas with a lax rhyme matching even lines, with uneven lines remaining unrhymed, as in the work of Liiv's favorite poet Heinrich Heine. Liiv's ability to express existential and holistic feelings of life by extremely spare poetic means, without ever becoming directly sentimental, was later described by Ivar Ivask as Liiv's "essential simplicity."

Liiv who spent his life in elementary poverty, troubled by mental illness since 1893, did not manage to publish any poetry books in his life. His canon was established posthumously by Friedebert Tuglas who in 1926 published a lengthy monograph on Liiv's life and work, to be followed immediately by a major selection of Liiv's poetry, in 1927, on the basis of handwritten (and often almost unreadable) manuscripts left by Liiv. From under Liiv's scribbles on the back page of a notebook, Tuglas, for instance, resuscitated a short poem comparable with Hälderlin's "Hälfte des Lebens":

Come, night's darkness,
gather me to your lap.

My sun doesn't recognize me,
the night is left to me.

There's not a single star,
I am in fear.

Cover me. (Trans. J. Talvet and H. L. Hix)

Juhan Liiv's patriotic poetry is much subtler than the fatherland-poems written by Lydia Koidula. Like Kreutzwald in his *Kalevipoeg*, Liiv not only sought to refute the external enemies under whose dominion Estonia had suffered in the past, but also included in his patriotism criticism of his own people's vices, such as greed and vulgarity of spirit. Liiv's poetry intertwines genuine lyrical sensibility with irony and humor that points at the limits of human science and earthly aspirations. He defends the world's natural integrity, in which the tiniest individual particle, however fragile, has its significance. [6]

In 1966 the Juhan Liiv Poetry Prize was established. Although it was awarded for the first publication of only one poem published during a year, it rapidly gained prestige. In 1970, because the local communist authorities considered it "dangerously nationalistic," the prize was banned, but after a break of fourteen years it was restored, and has been awarded ever since. The prize, reflecting Juhan Liiv's fate and spirit, does not include any remuneration. It is given for only one poem, published for the first time during the year prior to the prize. Among the poets who have been awarded the prestigious prize twice are Kalju Lepik, Ene Mihkelson, Mari Vallisoo, and Triin Soomets.

Juhan Liiv apart, the mainstream of Estonian poetry, until the outbreak of World War II and the loss of the country's short-lived independence, followed the patterns of European symbolism. Estonian symbolist poetry, however, being much younger than West-European symbolism, never abandoned romantic undertones. On the eve of the establishment of the Estonian Republic (1918), revolutionary idealism mingled with skeptical irony in the poetic work of Gustav Suits (1883-1956), one of the leaders of the "Young Estonia" movement, who, like Marie Under and many other prominent Estonian intellectuals, died in exile, never able to return to his home country. Suits is perhaps at his best in descriptive-meditative poems, like "Krupp" (1922) – comparable in its critical tonality with Heine's *Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen.* The general distrust by Estonian intellectuals of Germany, with its growing industrial-military presence menacing Europe, is clearly revealed in the poem. At the end of the poem, Suits contrasts Germany as "hell's mouth" with Paris, the ideal paradigm of culture and modernity for the great majority of Estonia's writers and artists before WWII.

Marie Under's (1883 – 1980) best-known poems are those she published in early collections such as *Sonetid* ('Sonnets', 1917). In their erotic openness and spontaneous sensibility Under's sonnets resemble the poems of some of her contemporary Latin American women poets, the Chilean Gabriela Mistral or the Uruguayan Juana de Ibarbouru. With Mistral, there is also a parallel in the later work of Under, especially in her ballads, in which both folkloric and biblical motives can be found. At the same time Under was not at all alien to a critical-social sensibility. Before WWII she reflected in several poems the everyday misery of the people of lower classes. Unlike the "Young Estonians", she even dared to extend her criticism to the European "centre", as in the poem "Seine", in which the river is described as bearing an "iron corset", like "a dog accustomed to its chain", nourished by the filth of the French metropolis, an apparent symbol for the poetess of alienation from nature. After WWII, while in exile in Sweden, Under reflected above all the anguish and suffering of Estonian war refugees, torn from their homeland.

The vitalist-individualist poetry of the "Siuru" group (Marie Under, Henrik Visnapuu, 1889 – 1951, and others) was soon transformed into the more disciplined poetic line of the influential group "Arbujad" ("Magicians"): Uku Masing (1909 – 1985), Bernard Kangro (1910 – 1994), Heiti Talvik (1904 – 1947) and Betti Alver (1906 – 1989). Masing, one of the great sages of Estonia, who in 1947 became a doctor of theology, lived in postwar Soviet Estonia in a kind of internal exile, never seeing his poetry published again. He differed from other members of the group by his interests in Oriental philosophy, folklore and literature, as well as by strongly opposing Western orientation in culture. Symptomatically, Masing's poems were absent in a major anthology of Estonian poetry, *Eesti luule*, edited by Paul Rummo in 1967 (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat). His vast essayistic-philosophic work has been published posthumously.

In comparison with with Masing, Betti Alver fared somewhat better, as from the second half of the 1960s her talent was re-discovered and acclaimed again in Estonia. Her husband Heiti Talvik, on the contrary, became a victim of Stalinist deportations and died in Siberia. Bernard Kangro, who fled in 1944 to Sweden, founded in Lund an Estonian publishing house, which became one of the main intellectual nuclei of the Estonian postwar diaspora. Alver and Talvik wrote both under the influence of Baudelaire and *fin-de-siècle* decadence poetry, now depicting social misery, now the existential limits of human existence. Both were also inspired by François Villon, in introducing ludicrous irony, playful grinning, and elements of allegory, as they observed the pre-war fall of the West, with Estonia, in Europe's northeastern periphery.

As mentioned above, under the influence of Western symbolism, our pre-war poets of the consecrated groups ("Siuru", "Arbujad") predominantly relied on rhymed stanzas. Paradoxically, the quatrain with full end-rhymes, inherited from the poets of the "national awakening" period, was gradually canonized as the main vehicle of poetic expression, to remain in full vigor at least till the end of the twentieth century. Of slightly more than a hundred poets included in the voluminous anthology *Eesti luule*, nearly eighty have resorted at least in some of their poems to the fully end-rhymed quatrain. It is even more surprising to find the same verse pattern perma-

nently present in the last volume (IV) of *Sõnarine*, the largest existing anthology of Estonian poetry, edited by Karl Muru (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, Vol. I, 1989 – 560 pp; Vol. II, 1992, 798 pp; Vol. III, 1993, 640 pp; Vol. IV, 1995, 736 pp). Volume IV starts with examples of the poetry by Paul-Eerik Rummo (b. 1942) and includes in its end part poets born in the 1950s and 1960s (among the best-known, Doris Kareva, b. 1958, Mari Vallisoo, b. 1950, Tõnu õnnepalu, b. 1962, Hasso Krull, b. 1964, Priidu Beier, b. 1957, Kauksi Ülle, b. 1962, Indrek Hirv, b. 1956). Of the 62 poets included in the volume, about one third still offer examples of the four-line end-rhymed stanza.

Why do I speak of it as a phenomenon apart in Estonian poetry and call it a paradox? Because it very much resembles the tough enterprise of the French Pleyade poets who in the middle of the sixteenth century tried to model the French language departing from the Latin syntax, thus not taking into account the natural limits of a particular language. Estonian language is characterized by a great richness of individual forms. Our traditional poetry relied as the main poetic means on alliterations and assonances, without adapting any strict end-rhymes, for which neither our verbs nor nouns would provide good material. Full end-rhymes in Estonian are formed with a considerable difficulty, their limited variety being easily predictable. In a full contrast with Romance languages, from which during the Middle Age end-rhymes as such started to spread in European poetry, end-rhymes in Estonian poetry tend to sound artificial. Even English, German, and Russian have much richer reserves for rhyming words than Estonian.

In practical terms this means that an Estonian poet (or translator), to write (or to translate) a poem relying on end-rhymes, must first carefully calculate the existing end-rhyme possibilities, and only after that "technical" operation will s/he be able to start to create the poem. "Technicality" inevitably slows down and curbs spontaneity of poetic expression. Thinking gets separated from emotion. I do not argue at all that successful application of full end-rhymes in Estonian poetry has been completely missing. It can be effective in shorter poems, such as sonnets, for instance, or in satirical poetry. Also, in the field of translation, along the twentieth century, we have had a number of great masters of transmitting rhymed poetry into our language (Ants Oras, Johannes Semper, August Sang, Harald Rajamets, Kalju Kangur, Ain Kaalep), nearly all of them talented poets themselves. However, I am skeptical about the use of full end-rhymes in longer poems, lyrical poems and, above all, their adaptation as a guarantee of the quality in poetic creation. Rather, in the Estonian language, it tends to be a *tour de force*, hard toil of thinking in rhymes, with fruits more often than not failing to live up to expectations.

During the first two decades of the postwar years in Estonia, under the heavy burden of communist ideology, Debora Vaarandi (1916 – 2007) and Ilmi Kolla (1933 – 1954) were among the most notable poetic talents. The former, accepted and acclaimed by the official regime, inevitably paid some tribute to the system. As has been the case with many outstanding left-wing poets, Neruda, Hikmet, Alberti, etc., Vaarandi's political ingenuousness does not exclude lyrical sensibility of intimate metaphors, in which she rivaled Marie Under herself. Besides, Vaarandi was

the translator into Estonian of the poetry of Edith Södergran (1986), the Swedish-Finnish writer who unlike her contemporary Estonian women poets of the start of the twentieth century, created her poems almost exclusively in free unrhymed verse. The equally deep lyric talent of Ilmi Kolla was fated to remain in the bud, as early tuberculosis ended her life at the same young age as Kristian Jaak Peterson.

From the beginning of the 1960s, however, fresh aspirations made themselves felt in Estonian poetry, both in exile and the "conditionally liberalized" Estonia. Jaan Kross (b. 1920), later celebrated mainly as a novelist, was one of the pioneers in introducing new free verse rhythms. He was seconded by Ain Kaalep, one of the most important mentors of the following generation. Kaalep not only wrote in free verse, but inspired by his extremely broad translation activity—he became the translator of the work of García Lorca, Prévert, Pessoa, Vallejo and many other important poets — he introduced into Estonian poetry entirely new rhythms and meters, both ancient and modern, from different parts of the world. Surrealist germs were not absent entirely: these infiltrated, on the one hand, from the work of the emigré poet Ilmar Laaban (1921 – 2000); and on the other hand from the bold, highly playful and philosophically suggestive free language associations that became the core of the poetry of Artur Alliksaar (1923 – 1966)—one of the greatest European "language poets." Alliksaar, too, was a victim of the Soviet regime: accused of treason, he was imprisoned and deported to Siberia in 1954; after many hardships he was allowed to return to Estonia in 1958, earning daily bread by simple manual labor.

Besides Laaban, among younger Estonian exiles who started to write poetry abroad, Kalju Lepik (1920 – 1999), Ivar Grünthal (1924 – 1996), and Ivar Ivask (1927 – 1992) have been the most important. As compared with the older generation of the poets forced to create in exile, a new openness to the wider world emerged, as well as a more varied critical sensibility. Thus, Kalju Lepik's grim irony was not exclusively targeted at the misery of his homeland under the communist regime, but also at the gradual accommodation of his compatriots to the material welfare and life-style of the West.

To conclude the overview, I will go back to the beginning of my essay and try to characterize briefly the work of the poets included in the anthology *On the Way home: An Anthology of Contemporary Estonian Poetry*.

This book includes Estonian poetry of the last thirty or forty years of the twentieth century. Like any anthology, it is by no means exhaustive, nor can it satisfy all tastes. The selection includes examples from the work of poets from the middle and young generation—starting with Hando Runnel, born in 1938, and ending with one of the latest winners of the Juhan Liiv Prize, Triin Soomets, born in 1969—who have brought some change into Estonian poetry. Another important criterion in selecting the poems has been to introduce to the international reader poets and poems that may add some new shades and colors—however modest—to international poetic experience. However subjective or, in part, even "uncanonical" the selection might appear, its purpose has been to offer the international audience a variety of different, sometimes even radically exclusive poetic voices and ways.

Hando Runnel (b. 1938), by now a celebrated classic of modern Estonian liter-

ature, worked under Soviet rule in steady opposition to the official truths. Though he has never studied philosophy or philology at a university, by stubborn self-teaching he has become one of the best connoisseurs of Estonian culture and literature. He has been seen generally as an incarnation of nationalist and patriotic spirit, in fact in many ways as a direct opposite of the cosmopolitan Jaan Kaplinski. His Estonian-centeredness, added to the fact that he mainly has written not-easily-translatable rhymed poetry, accounts for his being almost unknown beyond Estonian borders. In Estonia, on the contrary, his poetry has enjoyed the widest possible audience, as many of his poems have been sung by well-known artists and even choirs, their melody being created by some of the most famous Estonian composers, including Veljo Tormis and Rein Rannap. From Runnel's third collection (1972) mocking and grinning tonality became his characteristic feature, though deep existential grief never disappeared. His poetry is rich in intertextual associations, mostly used in a parodying and debunking way. The principal philosophical line of Runnel's poetry is "ethnocentric collectivism": the preoccupation with the fate of his own nation, Estonia, as part of the world global ethnic ecology, indeed, is the axis of Runnel's world outlook.

In Defense Of The Sad

In defense of the sad someday I'll found a city.
In defense of the sad I'll build them brick houses.
In defense of the sad I'll grate windows and doors.
In defense of the sad I'll station guards.
In defense of the sad I'll forbid sad thoughts.
In defense of the sad I'll demand that everyone laugh.
In defense of the sad I'll waste years and care.
In defense of the sad I'll found a city of the sad. (1972) (Trans. J. Talvet and H. L. Hix)

If an authentic forerunner for the trend of "de-semiotization" in postmodern poetry were sought, Andres Ehin (b. 1940) would best fit that role. Having become fond, at a very early age, of the loosely playful imagery of surrealists (in the Estonian case, of Ilmar Laaban's and Artur Alliksaar's poetry), Ehin did not attempt to oppose the absurd or semi-absurd language of the official Soviet regime by a deeper human content, but chose to face or echo that official absurdity by a poetic absurdity, purposefully depriving his images of any clearly graspable meanings. In that, he often relied on puns and sound effects.

Spring Night

Grass and leaves smell
every moment more wild.

Women are every moment

more beautiful and alive.

Sharp stars
prick one's nostrils
and cause a sneeze. (2000) [1959] (Trans. J. Talvet and H. L. Hix)

Jaan Kaplinski (b. 1941) was until the restored Estonian independence the only Estonian poet whose works had gained some international audience. Several of his books of poetry have been translated into English, both in the U. S. and Great Britain, and a book of poems written directly in English appeared in Canada. A graduate in French philology from the University of Tartu, Kaplinski has an extraordinary gift for languages and has shown himself open to the wider world from the very beginning of his work. He not only knows nearly all European languages, but also Japanese and Chinese, having become a follower of ancient oriental philosophies, above all of Taoism, seeking in consequence a rejection of abstractions and dogmatic thinking of any kind, and a search for a magic totality of life. At the same time Kaplinski has shown a keen interest in contemporary socio-political processes in the world and in Estonia, siding with ecologists and left-wing thinkers in their opposition to the excesses of the capitalist market economy. The main charm of Kaplinski's poetry emanates from skillfully achieved poetic shifts, i. e. constant and flexible movements between the local and the quotidian, on the one hand, and the universal and the philosophical, on the other. His images stand out by their extreme concreteness (local details of Estonian landscapes and nature), and at the same time nearly always intuit some deeper current of thinking—connections with the universal history and ancient cultures—beyond them. Though predominantly meditative, sometimes with lyrical and often with prophetic accents, Kaplinski has to his advantage a fine sense for irony and humor, which makes his poetry even more winningly subtle.

Cranes
cranes fly home
under their wings
there remain
clouds and houses
airplanes at airports
and a lonely honeybee that
could not return before nightfall
C
N T
A U
S S
S S
U A
T N
C C

N T
A U
S S (1972) (Trans. J. Talvet and H. L. Hix)

Of the young talented poets who vigorously stood out in the Estonian poetic landscape of the 1960s, Paul-Eerik Rummo (b. 1942) was the brightest, perhaps even more acclaimed then than Runnel or Kaplinski. Whereas Runnel developed mainly in the satirical and Kaplinski in the meditative vein, Rummo's domain was the spontaneous and the lyrical. His "Hamlet's Songs" can be regarded as the peak of lyrical expression in Estonian post-war poetry. His metaphors were spontaneous and immediate, and in his sensibility for the phonetic possibilities of the Estonian language he rivaled even Alliksaar. Rummo's sensibility, however, was not limited to the merely intimate or personal. By means of symbols his poems also show deep social and existential awareness, a rejection of the dogma and alienation under the Soviet regime. This rejection was still carefully camouflaged by symbols and allegory in his play *Cinderellagame* —one of the most successful original Estonian plays from the Soviet period. However, as soon as Rummo, stimulated by the warm and enthusiastic welcome his work received in the young generation, tried by stressing the ideal of "socialism with a human face" to transgress the "border" between the non-official and the official, he was immediately and crudely halted by the communist authorities. His poetic cycle *Saatja aadress* (*The Sender's Address*), containing poems written between 1968 and 1972, was barred and not published in its full form until 1989. As a result of that incident, Rummo underwent a deep psychological crisis that has restrained his original poetic creation in the following years, though he has been highly appreciated as the principal translator of T. S. Eliot's work, and has been active both culturally and politically.

Juhan Viiding (1948 – 1995), alias Jüri Üdi, was the brightest talent to appear in Estonian poetry in the 1970s. Working since 1972 as a professional actor at the Estonian Drama Theater in Tallinn, he never wrote essays or criticism. Under the pseudonym of Jüri Üdi (George Marrow) Viiding brought into Estonian poetry an unprecedented playful "lightness." By rapid shifts from irony to self-irony, from the grotesque to cordiality or even anguish, and through witty puns, colloquial speech, abundant quotations and pastiches, Viiding gained immense popularity among the Estonian reading public from the very start. In his best poetry, Viiding employed a style reminiscent of children's verse. He wrote mostly in simple rhymed quatrains, using short phrases and repetitions that call to mind the style of the decrees of the official Soviet ideology, its clear-cut truths and definitions and infantile goodness emanating from the all-knowing Party. Viiding had a special talent for mixing different "stories" in the same text and leaving them unfinished. Into this semi-parodic style, however, he used to intermingle unexpected tragic tonality, creating sudden dissonances. The officially claimed goodness in the surrounding reality (the Soviet Estonia) is seen as hypocritical, but to a greater extent than, for instance, in the poetry of Rummo, the alienation reaches from the forcefully imposed system to the ordinary Estonian himself, who is thoroughly vulnerable, open to the seductions of the system as well as to

earthy pleasures. The anguish of that continuing radical alienation may account for Viiding's tragic decision to commit suicide.

From Harald,
Who Committed Hara-Kiri,
To Rahel

we two were so lovely
and cactuses grew in the room
Rahel, you abandoned me
I'll use a knife as my doom

I know about the deadly sin
that one should not kill oneself
take it as a foregone conclusion
and skim the diary on my shelf

your name is there in every sentence
because the talk is all of you
in my funeral's black chaos
let your weeping adorn you (1971) (Trans. J. Talvet and H. L. Hix)

In a manner unusual for Estonian poetry, Ene Mihkelson (b. 1944) has written almost exclusively in unrhymed free verse, often intentionally making the verse rhythm differ from the phrase rhythm (i. e. starting new phrases in the middle of a line) and abandoning punctuation. Though these features are by no means new in international modernist poetics, their constant use in Mihkelson has meant undermining a longer tradition in Estonian poetry. The "self" scrutinized by Mihkelson is not really an object, but is hidden in the poet herself so deeply that she has constant difficulties trying to express it or to drag it to the light of clarity. This has led her to a radical pessimism, contradicting both the official optimism of the Soviet ideology and the euphoric nationalism after the country's regained independence. Needless to say, it has also meant a rejection of the self-confident irony so widespread in postmodern "mainstream" art. The "borders" of the "self" in Mihkelson thus remain intransigent, though the poet has never abandoned her efforts to transgress them, towards an ethic of integrity, which can be conjectured (though obscurely) in the proximity to Nature.

A frog jumped through the scythe
and screamed It was as if
it were the voice of the scythe itself
touching the living (1989) (Trans. J. Talvet and H. L. Hix)

Like Mihkelson, Mari Vallisoo (b. 1950) made her poetic debut at the end of the 1970s, but unlike Mihkelson, she has been more sparse than abundant in her pro-

duction, and has published little if anything besides poetry. Whereas Mihkelson's main discourse is heavily burdened with a fundamentalist search for the "self," Vallisoo, though essentially a poet of tragic inspiration, has been able to introduce into her poetic vision lighter shades of (often popular) humor and wisdom. The charm of her poetry emerges, for the most part, in swift transitions from the humbly trivial and intimate to the mythical, and vice versa. In a way, she has continued the rich balladic tradition of Estonian romantic and symbolist poetry, but has at the same time successfully introduced varying colloquial rhythms, not common in the previous ballad pattern. The mythical tendency in her poetry is mingled with a contrasting and playful de-mythicizing, by which she, often with bitter irony, discloses the hidden shades of humankind's selfishness (as especially in the poem "Heroes to Each Other," where a dialogue between the universal hero Heracles and the local hero Kalevipoeg is allusively rendered).

Heroes To Each Other

Where have you come from? Where are you going?
Oh, just hurrying
to a heroic deed.
Passing by — a man was there on a rock,
bound, a bird
annoyed him.
I unbound him from the rock.
And yourself? What's on your mind?

With a kid over the sea
I have to settle accounts.
On my way I visited some corners
of the world — ports, an island
where a girl was ruined.
No more time to speak. (2000) (Trans. J. Talvet and H. L. Hix)

Still with time ahead to reveal fully his poetic talents and to assert a definite place in the present-day young poetic generation, Hasso Krull (b. 1964) became in the 1990s a leading literary and art critic, whose views have been first and foremost influenced by the French post-structuralist thinking. The purposefulness of the meaningless in deconstructing and defying the previous national and international "big narratives" can be seen in Krull's poetry with much more clarity than, for instance, Ehin's absurd imagery ever managed to convey. His poem "Modern Discourse" reads as a fine postmodern manifesto.

Modern Discourse

In old times people had a clear and determined worldview.

They didn't try to invent bicycles again,
because Buddha already had spoken.
And Christ and Mohammed and Aristotle.
Already Confucius had instructed everyone
to turn the left cheek.
Children drank milk, grew like plants,
a housewife cooked in the kitchen.
The law of the strong reigned.
Nobody had to hurry anywhere, there was no rush
or noise of machines,
there was vodka, there was temperance.
Already Hegel said.
Already Goethe said.
The bigger could not harm the smaller.
The fight was man against man and woman against woman.
Everyone must meditate daily,
let's say five minutes.
In old times they lived with nature, lived in harmony,
everything was as it should be.
Oh times, oh habits, oh universality!
Oh naturalness!
Only Christ was ethical.
If only one could return those times for a while,
then even to work in a factory would be acceptable. (1993) (Trans. J. Talvet and H. L. Hix)

The same kind of defiance found in Hasso Krull's poetry occurs in the poems of Triin Soomets (b. 1969). However, some of Soomets' poems reveal a spontaneous personal passion that may easily transcend that influential pattern of the postmodern "grand narrative," which has not concealed its shyness facing immediate physical reality and has traditionally distrusted emotive significance. The work of Soomets embodies woman's psychosomatic revolt against the rationally organized, purposeful establishment, set up and ruled predominantly by male-kind.

a gynecologist in a narrow dress comes tapping
looks with her green eyes at my flowery veil
her suntanned cheeks glitter like a metal
in an endless corridor I recede covering with my hands
dull white skin green walls
straight to a dead end at a stool
she puts her foot victoriously on my chest
tearing bracelets breaking my hand
until with a clatter——
well I am I am 25000 times guilty

write it down finally
cry it out finally
into the enduring memory of pioneers (1990) (Trans. J. Talvet and H. L. Hix)

【Notes】

1. Here and in the following translation from Estonian is mine. J. T.
2. For further reading about Peterson, see Arne Merilai, "Genius of Estonian Poetry – Kristian Jaak Peterson." *Estonian Literary Magazine* 19 (Autumn, Tallinn, 2004).
3. August Annist. *Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwaldi "Kalevipoeg"*, ed. Ülo Tedre (Tallinn, 2005).
4. The first English translation (by Jüri Kurman) appeared in 1982: *Kalevipoeg. An Ancient Estonian Tale* (Moorestown, New Jersey).
5. Cf. Marin Laak, "Beyond the Literary Canon: Recontextualisation of Classical Texts in the Digital Environment", *Interlitteraria*, 15, 2010. About *Kalevipoeg* in the comparative cue, see also Sergei Kruks' article "*Kalevipoeg* and *Lā? plēsis*: The Way We Imagine Our Communities" in *Interlitteraria* 8 (2003): 227 – 247, and my own article "Constructing a Mythical Future City for a Symbiotic Nation from the European Periphery" in *Interlitteraria* 14, Vol. I. 84 – 103.
6. About recent writings in English about Liiv, cf. my introductory essay "Juhan Liiv and His Existential Poetry" in a bilingual selection of Liiv's poetry *Meel paremat ei kannata / The Mind Would Bear No Better* (Trans. J. Talvet and H. L. Hix, Tartu, 2007. 29 – 52) and also my longer article "Juhan Liiv and 'Young Estonia'" in *The End of Autonomy*. Ed. C. Hasselblatt. (Maastricht, 2008): 85 – 98.

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Estonian Poetry in English

Lauri Pilter

Abstract Since 1950, Estonian poetry, ignored in international literary discourse because of the small spread and unfamiliar character of the language, has made a number of notable appearances in English translations. With the work of two British translators, Harris and Matthews, several classical poets were rendered into sonorous English, mostly with a full correspondence of rhymes and rhythmic patterns. The Estonian translator Oras continued their approaches. In the last decades of the 20th century, free verse translations, either of traditional forms or of original free verse, began to appear, with more interest in conveying the exact image structure. The exiled scholar and poet Ivask first translated and introduced talented new poets living in Soviet Estonia. Along with Ivask, a few Estonians have written their own poetry in English. In the 21st century, the cooperation of native Estonian speakers, mostly poets, with writers in English, has produced a new level of immediacy in translations. Efforts have been abandoned to convey the full values of older, rhymed poetry. The approximation of English translations to the originals is complicated even because of the vast grammatical and phonological differences of the languages. Elaborate new translation strategies have been developed by R. W. Stedingh in cooperation with T. E. Moks in their rendering of Arved Viirlaid's poetry, and by H. L. Hix in cooperation with J. Talvet. A selection of the classic Juhan Liiv, a modern anthology and two selections of Talvet's poems have appeared in Hix's translation in recent years.

Key words comparative poetics; history of Estonian verse; literary identity; rhyme problems; translation

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The position of Estonian poetry in international literary life is rather unfavourably determined by the exceptionally small number of readers who are able to understand literary works in Estonian. By the peculiarities of its grammar and by its main vocabulary, Estonian stands rather isolated from all the other languages. The only other people with a national literature, who might be able to understand some Estonian without any learning, are the Finns, not a big nation themselves, either. The Estonian ethnicity is defined by the language, and the very smallness of the ethnicity makes the language unattractive for potential translators, discouraging them from training to tune their senses to the literary keys of Estonian. Rendering poetry requires lyrically talented translators who are also experts in the language and lore of the country; outstandingly good translations are few and many works by a lot of the most inspiring poets remain without counterparts of matching quality in English.

The early forms of Estonian literary language emerged in the early 1500s (religious writings). Though it has few, if any, achievements of high literary culture to boast about from those early centuries, the treasures of written Estonian nevertheless have a long and solid history, accompanied with the tradition of oral folk songs which were memorized and passed on through ages. The relevance of an Estonian poet therefore often depends on how they recognize the dignity of that tradition, a bulwark against the whirlwinds of fleeting trends, superficial cultural temptations and changing political climates. It is on the ground of such consciousness of literary tradition that the poets ought to maintain their sensitivity to the pleasures and plights of the present. The foundation of one's poetic establishment cannot remain unshaken if one simply ignores what forms of versification were employed in the same language several centuries ago; if the poet is aware of them and then departs from those forms for new ends, there will still be an open dialogue with the predecessors.

Estonian Poetry in the Early 20th Century

The rather sudden rise of the quantity, and more importantly, the quality of the Estonian verse in the first decades of the twentieth century has to do with the general sociocultural changes in the region. For centuries, most of individualised poetry had been written in German by the main cultural elite, the Baltic German aristocracy. By the beginning of the twentieth century, their authority and collective spiritual power had begun to decline. Estonian-language newapapers had been encouraging the ethnic self-consciousness of the native peasants. In the first decade of the new century, the "Young Estonia" literary movement, headed by the poet Gustav Suits (1883 – 1956), manifested the intention of the Estonian literati to abandon the German models. Marie Under (1883 – 1980), the Estonian poetess of perhaps the highest renown of all Estonian women writers, initially had been writing poems in German but switched to Estonian early in her creative life (Lukas 465). With her, a representative of the "Siuru" ("Bluebird") literary movement, as with most of her contemporaries and successors (up to the "Arbujad"/"Logomancers", or "Magicians", school of poets, emerging in the late 1930s and including Betti Alver, Heiti Talvik, Uku Masing, Bernard Kangro, August Sang), it appeared to be the case of a newborn literary self-consciousness establishing itself in a language which few had earlier taken seriously as a medium of *belles-lettres*. The authors were keen on matching the beauty and depth of their Western European contemporaries and immediate precursors. The leading figures of the movement that strove for refashioning Estonian literary language after Western models saw the plastic potentials of the tongue as only being discovered. Most of earlier poetic styles were regarded as crude, initiated as they usually were by those who spoke Estonian as a second or third language. The venerable folk poetry tradition, on the other hand, represented an outmoded and archaic language (with greater similarity to modern Finnish) which was neither spoken nor used in printing. Its latent inspiring potentials were frequently not recognized. The Western aspirations, such as a need for high-quality poetry translations, called for greater flexibilities and subtleties. The highly inflected character of the language therefore required decisive and full-scale application. Another part of the spirit of belles-lettres

was to be an uncompromising perfection in rhymes. Free verse may be freer from tiresome conventions, such arguments would run, but often it is also lacking an invigorating sense of discipline. The poets mostly wrote metrical verses with full rhymes. The major literary influences were French, German, English and Russian.

The heritage of that period, throned by Marie Under and later also by Betti Alver (1906 – 1989), is uniquely and unapologetically national. Under has often been compared to the Expressionists and Alver to the Symbolists, but it is important to see how much both, and their fellow poets from respective movements, also wrote as inheritors to even earlier cultural developments, such as Humanism and the Enlightenment. More than their Western kindred spirits, however, and typically of Estonia's rustic roots, those poets felt close to nature, shaping their poetic voices in concord with nature and as parts of an earthy chorus. Hence the general joy and brightness of their imagery, to which the many depressive voices of the late 20th century stand in stark contrast. Those traits, and the particular feminine strength and integrity of Under and Alver, related perhaps to the old position of female folk poets in the lore of Estonian peasantry, constitute a specific poetic phenomenon that has mostly passed for unnoticed by international receivers. It is not even so much a question of the existence, competence and quality of translations, nor of the knowledge or ignorance of the Estonian language, that plays the decisive role in the interest or disinterest in those Estonian schools of poetry. Rather, one should be prepared beforehand for encountering a specific blend, without analogies in other cultures, of sensual emancipation, a relative traditionalism in form, a lake of centuries old humanist attitudes, an enlightened nationalism, a certain degree of backwoods pride, and often a bold and unaffected femininity.

Beginnings of English Translations

The first translations into English of Estonian literature were renderings of folk poetry, done indirectly through the German language. The very first of those early glimpses was the collection *Popular Poetry of the Esthonians*, published in London in 1795, and including twelve folk songs. In 1863, the two volumes of Robert Gordon Latham's (1812 – 1888) monograph Nationalities of Europe were published in London, the first volume containing fourteen translations of Estonian lyrical folk songs, which the author had translated from the German work, *Ehstnische Volkslieder*, ("Estonian Folksongs", 1850 – 1852), by the Baltic German folklorist Alexander Heinrich Neus (1795 – 1876). The retelling in prose, titled *The Hero of Esthonia*, of the Estonian national verse epic, *Kalevipoeg*, by William Forsell Kirby, was published in two volumes in London in 1895. Besides introducing the epic and a wide selection of tales based on native legends, it also included suggestive translations of four Estonian folk ballads, "The Herald of War", "The Blue Bird I", "The Blue Bird II" and "Charm against Snake-Bite".[1]

Among translators into English, the exceptional flowering of Estonian poetry in the early 20th century was perhaps first noticed by the Welsh Estophile Ernest Howard Harris (1876 – 1961). In the two interwar decades (1920 – 1940) of the Estonian independence, he wrote a series of short books, introducing the culture, and espe-

cially the achievements of literature, of the much-ignored Baltic Finnic nation to the readers of English. In 1950, a small but outstanding anthology of Estonian poetry in the translation by Harris was published in Britain. Supplied with Harris's foreword, the anthology consists of samples from folk poetry and Kalevipoeg, the leading poetic figures of the first national awakening (Lydia Koidula, 1843 – 1886, Karl Eduard Sööt, 1862 – 1950), through the solitary Juhan Liiv (1864 – 1913) and the orientally meditative Ernst Enno (1875 – 1934) to representatives of the first (Gustav Suits, Marie Under, Henrik Visnapuu) and second generations (Heiti Talvik, Betti Alver, Bernard Kangro) of the Western-oriented currents of poetry, concluding with the promising new diction of Arved Viirlaid. Harris with very few exceptions uses full rhymes which are resonant and plain. The style of the English is archaic, with forms like "thou", which mostly befits the earlier poets, and with syntactic inversions that had mainly become outdated in English poetry when those translations appeared. The free verse translation of Gustav Suits's "Under the Quivering Aspens" in that anthology is the first one of that poem, and Harris's work with Talvik's and Alver's poetry is likewise pioneering. His eight translations of Juhan Liiv's poems have remained the only ones of that poet to attempt an exact reflection of the original rhyme schemes. Liiv's Estonian rhymes are sometimes of a full quality but more often only approximate. The monosyllabic full rhymes of Harris's translation successfully convey Liiv's sincerity but may verge on oversimplification. The same qualities may entail more emotional involvement in the translations of poems by Lydia Koidula, as in the following:

The Mother Heart

There is a place on earth to see,
Abode of love and loyalty,
And everything that is most rare
Has taken sanctuary there.

The mother heart! Ah, do you know
Its tender firmness, constant glow?
Rejoicing in the joys you tell,
And sharing in your woes as well.

When you have come to feel again
The shifting praise, goodwill of men,
When all despise, and friendships break,
When faith and love do you forsake,

Then will that heart be manifest;
There still remains the place of rest
Where you can always dare to weep,
And in a constant heart to creep. (Koidula 13)

In 1951, the very first book-length selection of poems by a single Estonian poet, Bernard Kangro's (1910 – 1994) *Earthbound*, was published in Lund, Sweden. In 1953, a comprehensive *Anthology of Modern Estonian Poetry*, from the poems of Juhan Liiv to those of the contemporary young Estonian poets in Western exile, was issued by the University of Florida Press, in Gainesville, USA. A selection of Gustav Suits's verse, *Flames on the Wind*, containing forty-two poems from all his creative periods, appeared in London in 1953. A selection from Marie Under, *Child of Man*, with the same number of poems, followed in London in 1955. All the four books were compiled and translated by William Kleesmann Matthews (1901 – 1958), a professor of East European and Slavonic Studies at the University of London at the time. The son of an Estonian mother, of English descent from his father's side, born in the Eastern Estonian border city of Narva, he had the advantage of having mastered the literary registers of both the languages exceptionally well (Oras 228). The selections of Kangro, Suits, and Under, have remained the only book-form representations of those poets in English. W. K. Matthews, an associate of Professor Ants Oras, who strongly stood for rhymed verse in Estonian, seems to have held a similar position in his English translations, always preferring full rhymes (with the exception of the renderings of Bernard Kangro's imprecise rhymes). The concordant effect may too often resemble Robert Frost, which makes some of the poems by Gustav Suits and Marie Under sound suspiciously alike. Comparing the Estonian with the English versions, the impression is easy to arise that at times the translator has sacrificed some of the charm of the original phrase and the unity of poetic images to the effect of perfect end-rhymes. That is what the recent translations by J. Talvet and H. L. Hix (born in 1960) never do. But then, the latter have not translated Suits and Under, counting as two among the most significant poets of rhymes, but have focused on authors whose prevalent methods of versification rely on other means.

In any case, W. K. Matthews's work in translating those two major poets is to be esteemed and admired. It is only a pity that Matthews did not translate more of them—several of their masterpieces have been rendered but many more are missing. It is, however, a pleasing fact to have, thanks to Matthews, not only a selection of Marie Under's lyrical poetry but a few of her most impressive ballads ("Sea Kine", "Lady of Porkuni") available in English. Matthews's better achievements avoid monotony and display the airy spontaneity and free-flowing rhythm of some of English Renaissance poetry, like perhaps the following translation of a sonnet by Marie Under:

Summer Memory

The door ajar, I stood at point of day,
Tiptoe for you and with awakened eyes.
The sun's gold slipper trod the gravelled way,

The grasses spilled their dews in glad surprise –
And then you came out of a mist of flowers

That clung and swayed like knots of butterflies!

When afterwards we two, in softened hours,
Walked through the fields of rye all red for reaping,
I felt as if my heart obeyed new powers:

The old in me seemed either dead or sleeping,
And as I glimpsed the poppies' fluttering fire,
An eager pleasure set my pulses leaping,

And you, these sang, could give me my desire. (Under 34)

A cross-cultural, even gnoseological paradox concerning achievements like Matthews's lies in that his kind of fully rhymed and strictly metrical, smoothly readable translations may appear as even too smooth for native Estonian readers with knowledge of English, making it difficult for them to recognize their own native classics in such perfectly Anglicised vestment. The advanced role of co-authoring by the translator has made those poems more a part of the receiving literature and target language, diminishing their semantic and emotional ties with the Estonian. On the other hand, an English reader, not able to enjoy the originals, may in luckier places obtain a hint of the authors' unique talent from those translations, but on the whole they appear as just another respectable piece of contribution to the long-established English tradition of rhymed verse. Gustav Suits may be favourably compared with W. B. Yeats by Matthews's translations (as may Bernard Kangro); but it was difficult, if not impossible, to introduce Marie Under as a fresh poetic voice, as the great Estonian innovator, to English-speakers at the time when T. S. Eliot was remodeling verse principles in English poetry. It is therefore with only a small number of Matthews's translations that the achievement of more international notice may be hoped, as with perhaps the following rendering of a classic free verse poem by Gustav Suits:

Under Quivering Aspens

I am walking under quivering aspen-trees,
I am walking with silent thoughts of glamour,
Weary of reading famous visionaries.

The sun is setting saga-crimson beyond the burning
line of woods:
I see it with sore and fevered vision.
Then come gusts of subsiding evening breezes
That stir the aspens.

Over the mown leas gusts from the Land of Winds
Still scutter at times in the tops of the aspens.

Over the mown leas haymakers in the languor of evening
Plod homewards, passing between hanging birches.

My spirit in its frail body, quickened by the Land of Winds,
Longs to communicate itself to kindred life.
I salute you, aspens, my brothers, my sisters.

I am walking under quivering aspen-trees,
Mute, absorbed, with the steps of an exile.

Take me into your quivering, aspens. (Suits 42)

The translations by the two English native speakers, Harris and Matthews, were followed by the work of the Estonian, Professor Ants Oras (1900 – 1982). A scholar of Shakespeare and T. S. Eliot, a translator of major works by classic Latin, German, and English poets, Oras, fluent both in German and in English, translated a number of Estonian poets into those two Germanic languages. The German *Acht estnische Dichter* appeared in Stockholm in 1964. The English translations, representing the same poets, Gustav Suits, Marie Under, Heiti Talvik, Betti Alver, Uku Masing, and Aleksis Rannit, with the exclusion of two others, were done at some period in the 1960s while Oras was living in exile and working at foreign universities. The translations only appeared in a bilingual edition in Tallinn in 2002.[2]

The selections from the poets are not big. The original metres are meticulously followed, the rhymes mostly are precise, natural and fresh. There may even be instances (e. g. in the renderings of Uku Masing) in which the translator, by taking justified liberties, improves on the clarity of the author's phrasal imagery.

From the Later 20th Century

A rather small but comparatively representative selection of translations of Estonian poetry was published in the anthology *East European Poetry*, edited by Emery George, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 1983, and once again in 1993. It includes poems by Marie Under, Betti Alver, Uku Masing, Bernard Kangro, Kalju Lepik, Jaan Kaplinski, Paul-Eerik Rummo and Juhan Viiding, along with a few others. Most of the translations are by Ivar Ivask. The selection includes the long free verse poem "I Understood I Understood", with a Taoist outlook on man, culture and nature, by Jaan Kaplinski (born in 1941), which may be his most poignant single poem of all and which, when appearing in the collection "From Dust and Colours" in 1967, largely established his poetic reputation in Estonia. The English translation of that poem, by Hellar Grabbi, almost fully retains the suggestive power of the original.

I Understood I Understood

"is beautiful" is an illusion. It is time for esthetics
to die. The moon sets. Categories

lose their meaning. Something new
grows through the walls of Sparta.
Jericho
blow your trumpet John Coltrane blow don't be dead
return be a revenant be a phantom only don't be
silent shriek Ray Charles don't forgive Archie Shepp
blow blow away the firm cities the memorial tablets the holy books
the national heroes classical literature the renaissance the epics
the romanticism the Young Germans the Slavophiles Cromwell Richelieu
James Cook Columbus Vasco da Gama Philip Louis all of them
blow away their discoveries their borders blow
away their names their rooms and streets away Ludwig van
Beethoven G. W. F. Hegel Goethe Disraeli Alexander by
the grace of God Johann Strauss Baudelaire James Joyce away into the wind
of oblivion into the hot holy black wind of oblivion
their philosophy their music their pride and history
blow their banners inside out their moneybags genealogies
memoirs museums monuments of art tapestries draperies
capitals parliaments parties away their culture their
armless marble statues away back into the earth pantheons Phidias
Praxiteles broken pale statues which for centuries have
profaned the free living earth reviled the children and the sparrows
from their places up high blow into the burning all what is hope
black coal in the hard palms of rock layers …
(George 27 – 28)

In 1985, a book of translations of Jaan Kaplinski's poems, *The Same Sea in Us All*, appeared in Oregon, USA, rendered by Sam Hamill in cooperation with the author. In 1991, a collection of Kaplinski's original poetry in English, *I am the spring in Tartu: and other poems written in English*, edited and introduced by Laurence Patrick Anthony Kitching, appeared in Vancouver, British Columbia. Other English collections by Kaplinski, all published in the UK, include *The Wandering Border* (1992, translated by the author together with Sam Hamill and Riina Tamm), Through the Forest (1996, translated by Hildi Hawkins), and *Evening Brings Everything Back* (2004, translated by the author and Fiona Sampson). Among these poets, Jaan Kaplinski is the Estonian poet with the greatest number of collections having appeared in English.

In 1989, a booklet with translations of Betti Alver's verses was published in Toronto, Canada, rendered by Estonians in exile.[3] Only one of the translations mirrored the author's use of rhymes. All in all, the attempts to render the fully rhymed late symbolist poetry from the "Siuru" to the "Arbujad", began ceasing and gave way to new approaches to the original material as well as translation principles, in which the cooperation of Jüri Talvet and Harvey Lee Hix rose into eminence in the first decade

of the 21st century. However, in 2001, a rather voluminous dual-text anthology of Estonian poetry in English was published in Tallinn, compiled by the poetess Doris Kareva (born in 1958), and comprising works by Betti Alver, Artur Alliksaar, Uku Masing, Jaan Kaplinski, Paul-Eerik Rummo, Juhan Viiding, Doris Kareva, Tõnu Õnnepalu, and Triin Soomets. The samples by Betti Alver often had rhymes and followed regular metres; no such attempt had been made with the mystical poetry of Uku Masing, whose originals are amazingly rich in striking and fresh, though at times overly forced, rhymes.[4] The cooperation of Alan Peter Trei and Inna Feldbach produced enjoyable renderings of some of Artur Alliksaar's (1923 – 1966) free verse poetry, but the author's most characteristic "language poetry", heavily relying on the linguistic peculiarities of Estonian with assonances, alliteration and word play, remains untranslated and probably untranslatable.

Original Poetry in English

Among Estonian people of letters, few have written original poetry in English. Rein Sepp (1921 – 1995), who is remembered for having translated all the major Old Germanic epics into Estonian, wrote about a hundred poems in English, many more in German, and a smaller number in Swedish, Dutch, and Latvian. His contributions of the kind are virtually unknown even in Estonia. The majority of his English poetry is marred by occasional carelessness in expressive form and slips in taste, yet his resigned musings possess a serenity rare both in modern Estonian and English verse, that may remind one of the late poems of Thomas Hardy, as in the following poem dated July 14, 1971.

> Sure, the dream is now over:
> was it or ever has been?
> The sky falls lower and lower
> as life on a grey-growing screen.
>
> Only some colourful horses
> run truly their ground-bound rhyme.
> It's gold still the summer forces
> into the scent of a lime.
>
> My days have now all-all-right ended,
> what comes is marvellous fun.
> My heart has been finally mended
> by thorns of a heart-touching none. (manuscript)[5]

Reet Sool (born in 1951), an associate professor of English at Tartu University, writes poems in English. Her bilingual collections *murdub äär / river runs* (2001) and especially *õrn morpheus / sweet morpheus* (2007) display her ability to compose inventively playful, often rhymed, poetry in English with the confidence of a lyrically talented native speaker.

Smile Through the Glass

love is a glance
in the Paris Metro
and the last
(and first)
smile through the glass
exchanged (Sool 59)

Reet Sool mostly uses rhyme like T. S. Eliot often did: irregularly and only when it rises from the natural rhythm. In her humorous and frequently self-ironical verse, one can find echoes of both the Romanticist and Modernist poetic discourses.

The Wavering

My love, of course, spans the ocean
look at all the water
bottomless, boundless
often roaring
(rarely soundless)
all that longing swaying
where is is going
where is it staying

even the plants do
cling to the permanent
stones to the seabed
stars to the firmament

I cling to waves and
then to the wavering (Sool 71)

Rein Sepp and Reet Sool have written a lot of verse in Estonian. However, by turning to English these authors have crossed the line that by convention separates Estonian poetry from foreign literatures. Although these texts can hardly be defined as belonging to any other national literature, the general perception of ethnic identity preordains it that literary works in a foreign language unavoidably denote an exteriority to Estonian culture.

The line between the native and the cosmopolitan had been crossed likewise by the Estonian American poet, translator, and literary scholar Ivar Ivask (1927 – 1992). An interpreter of both Estonian and world, mostly twentieth century literature, a long-time editor of *World Literature Today*, an introducer of Baltic authors to wider audiences (as it was noted above, most of the Estonian poems in the *East Eu-*

ropean Anthology have been translated by him), in his late years Ivask published the beautiful *Baltic Elegies*, written originally in English. The two series of the elegies, ten poems in each, were written in 1986 and 1989. In a somewhat Rilkean diction they delineate a Baltic exile's mental journey homeward through languid images of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian landscapes. Rich in well-learned intercultural references, these elegies also hearken to the aboriginal melodic sounds of the poet's native language. The procession of images that leads to the spiritual return is likened to spirals, to the annual circles of trees, or the widening circles in water. "The language of my poems pulled me home, / noun by noun, verb by verb, / an endless line / of vowel harmonies / found an echo on the Baltic shore. / The echo said: a poet can return. / For poems are forever spirals / without end", the author writes in the First Elegy of the Second Series (Ivask 67). While the Fourth Elegy of the First Series acknowledges the tempting advantages of emancipated cosmopolitanism – "You write ritual spirals in poems / and offer them to the four winds" (22), the Eighth, after a five-word phrase in Estonian, *see on mu luule keel* ("this is the language of my poetry") concludes: "It is in Estonian I still count my annual rings" (26). Thus, because of his devoted meditations on the Estonian (and Baltic) language-based identities, Ivask's English masterpiece forms an exception (or offers a challenge) to the language-limited definition of Estonian poetry.

Recent Decades

A notable event for the Estonian literature was the publication of Arved Viirlaid's (born in 1922, an exile in Canada) *Selected Poems in English*, in Vancouver in 2001. Translated by the renowned American poet R. W. Stedingh in cooperation with the American Estonian, Taimi Ene Moks, the voluminous book contains a rich selection of poems from all the original collections of the five decades of the author's poetic creativity. Even better known as a productive novelist whose novels have been translated into nearly a dozen languages, Viirlaid as a poet carries on a few of the outlooks and principles of the pre-war Estonian schools of poetry, especially the "Arbujad"/ "Logomancers", with perhaps Bernard Kangro as the most direct influence. A lot of Viirlaid's poems are rhymed, but an almost equal part is in free verse, which gives reason to speak of him as a bold link between the older, interbellum Estonian verse tradition and the newer, late Soviet and post-Soviet developments in Estonia. The translators of the selection have based their work on elaborate and detailed principles, mostly abandoning the original rhymes in translation, but always maintaining a sensitive touch with the rhythms, the logic of images, the correspondence of sound effects. In the two accompanying essays to the selection, R. W. Stedingh both places Viirlaid in the context of Estonian poetry, observes his major characteristics and stylistic fluctuations through successive collections, interprets his esthetic peculiarities, and offers an exhaustive insight into the theoretical foundation of his own and Ms. Moks's translation principles, with precise calculations of limits set by linguistic differences, such as considerations of prosodic correspondences and numerous other aspects. Stedingh writes:

> In the Estonian, Viirlaid uses assonance, consonance, initial and end rhyme, refrains, symbols, metaphorical kennings and a number of other poetic devices; however, some of these same forms have been abandoned or de-emphasized by contemporary English, American, and Canadian poets, but to deny their utterance in the English would be to miss the formal expression of one of Viirlaid's major thematic concerns. What I have attempted here is to retain the flavor of these conventions without their becoming obtrusive in good English poems. I have not hesitated to make changes where they moved the English versions closer to the spirit of the originals (Stedingh 32).

As Jüri Talvet wrote in his review of Viirlaid's selection in *World Literature Today*, "*Selected Poems* is a worthy contribution to the other canon of Estonian literature, the one that, despite its inevitable halts and casualities, still, brick by brick, goes on building the image of Estonian literary culture in the eyes of the world" (170).

In spite of the fact that the majority of Professor Jüri Talvet's (born in 1945) poems are free verse and rhymeless, a number of their specific values cannot be adequately transmitted into English. In fact, rhymes as such are one of the lesser hindrances. Estonian, like Spanish (or Italian), and unlike English (or German), is a language in which vowels in unstressed syllables always retain their full value. That allows for sonorous effects similar in Spanish and Estonian, and for the assonance rhymes of words with two or more syllables. Mr. Talvet, as a scholar and translator of Spanish and Latin American literature, has been an avid employer of such linguistic possibilities and was indeed the one, after and along with Ain Kaalep, to first introduce such literary effects into Estonian verse. After the initial discoveries of the kind in his first two books of poetry (published in 1981 and 1986), almost the entire second half of his original *Eesti eleegia ja teisi luuletusi* ("Estonian Elegy and Other Poems", 1997), on whose basis his first English selection, *Estonian Elegy* (2008), was compiled and translated, contains poems, many of them about love, in Spanish metrical patterns and employing assonance rhymes. Such methods have an ambiguous and pleasantly bewildering effect in Estonian, because they appear both exotic and yet innately and latently available in the native language. It is as if a Spanish poet were writing in Estonian: an intercultural circulation which English translations can hardly render, and none of whose samples were included in the English selection. If one were to look for Talvet the poet as an "indigenous" Estonian, with voice modulations rooted in the melodious fabric of his native language, one should probably turn to those untranslated verses. His free verse poems show him as an international courier between a vast variety of contexts, from dream images of family events and of memorable childhood localities through reflective and introspective travel notes from around the globe to major historical and intercultural discourses. His lines of expression have evolved into an intertwining of sensually particularised imagery with ideas of aspirations that should guide humankind. Human failings may evoke satire, but the prevalent tone is of quiet musing. The verses, rich in echoes especially from Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, French, British, and German cultures, nearly always engage in a dialogue with either someone personally close or a distant soulmate.

Ossian's Songs

2
You have read the *Book of Kells*.
Ringabella rang in your ears like a beautiful ring.
Already the days could be paper-clipped together:
good or bad, praises and dispraises in pairs.
Sheets of a timeless book, around them only thin air.
Errant letters on the margin — *Today under my pen*
In the bright sun the parchment shone gold —
inspired even more.
The day's gifts of love seemed to have
the same weight. They showed the same
Confident coil of logic. Aba bcb cdc ded efe
fgf etc. —like the metric of Dante's verse
that remembers the past and is always full of the new.
But it is pointless for me to intrude into your day.
In the same way that night shuts your swinging door,
carelessly pushing from the sheet your careful pen,
I, Ossian, by the way of Ringabella
on a moonlit rock await the blind lightning of death
that must strike me, the red lance of love
that pierces me from behind.

3
To the nickeled handrails in the Amsterdam airport
one wished to shout:
Answer! Be alive!
The longing at the end of the 20th century to see
beautiful people
murderously burdens (as AIDS burdensomely
murders).
What 500-year-old nodule on nosebridge, what
furrow
between the brows in London's Queensway
hides from the eyes of Iseult, Laura, Francesca?
A voice at any rate remains communication.
Everything is a sign, every branch.
Do not expect the crowd to wait for your words,
when on the counters every crust of beauty,
every smile, every frail ray of memory stands exposed.
What do you desire, soul, Ossian?
On a high rock, you are no higher than others.

Listen then to the inward forest you carry.
There from leaves is freed, from the day's fatigue,
at the moment of departure — *come then*, *stay*,
be always — the voice of Iseult.
There from moss, from separation, flow into you,
faithful — *yes*, *everything*
is as you say — Francesca's green eyes. (*Estonian Elegy* 58 – 59)

Notwithstanding the special qualities of Estonian, Mr. Talvet's mature free verse poems include pieces that can be translated into English with a levity of form and gravity of content equal to the original, as the following poem for which he won the prestigious Juhan Liiv Poetry Prize in 1997 and which has been translated into seventy languages.

Love
is imperative, Kierkegaard
thought. Better,
I think, to love
without imperative.
Recognition
soul to soul,
correspondence
blood to blood,
flying
up or down,
without knowing
the destination. (*Estonian Elegy* 66)

The second English selection of Jüri Talvet's poems, *Of Snow*, *of Soul* (translated by H. L. Hix), includes verse from his three latest Estonian collections, all of the 21st century. In it, the continuing free verse, binding a keenness of mind with a misty softness of contemplation, has achieved an even more sensitively intimate level. [6]

As it may be with poetry in all languages, some of the most valuable qualities of Estonian verse are the untranslatable ones. It is especially true of the poetry of Juhan Liiv, the most tragic, the deepest and the sincerest of Estonian poets. With most Estonian masters of poetic expression, there may rise a vague sensation of the authors' tacit regret of their mother tongue not having happened to be one of the major languages of Western Europe, to have supplied them with the riches of ancient literary tradition and the continuity of polished poetic registers, along with a wide and competent reception worthy of their merits and talents. It is different with Juhan Liiv, whose magic uniqueness lies precisely in his humility as the poet of a small peasant people. In his methods of style and versification Liiv relies mostly on what are essentially the living oral traces of the language of Baltic Finnic folk poetry, dating back to the twi-

light of a distant illiterate past, with the age of perhaps millennia. He modulates that simplicity of ancient peasant language with a very subtle touch of his personal motives and experience, as minute motions in perception pierce his mind, and that symbiosis of laconic postulations of the poet's suffering self with a humble anonymity, gives his poems an enduringly noble ring. Other characteristics, such as the undeniable influence of Heinrich Heine on Liiv's rhymes and stanzas, are of secondary importance. Naturally enough, to perceive Liiv's particular power described here, one should read him in Estonian, as well as have a clear idea or some inkling of the flavour of Estonian folk poems. Ernest Howard Harris's fully rhymed iambic translations of Liiv from the early 20th century sound lucid and fluent enough, but his new translators Talvet and Hix have done the poet no lesser a favour by rendering his works, in the dual-text book *Meel paremat ei kannata / The Mind Would Bear No Better* (2007), mostly in free verse, though in rare cases one may find rhymes. The volume includes the translations of thirty-nine poems and six poetic fragments; previously, Harris and Matthews, each in their respective anthologies, had published only eight translations of Liiv's poetry.

Our Room's Ceiling Is Black

Our room's ceiling is black,
black with layers of smoke,
its spiderwebs and soot host
the cricket and the roach.

Impossible to say
what it has heard and seen,
since pain casts a shadow,
since it changes its expression.

It's seen its share of weeping,
and heard many quarrels,
so much, so much suffering,
God have mercy on us.

As is true of our time,
our room's ceiling is black:
as if it writhed in chains,
if only it could speak. (Liiv 89)

The closeness to nature, the breathing in unison with the country's and the Earth's destiny, are traceable in these translations, even with a hint of the cadences of the originals, as in the following, partly rhymed poem:

Oh Heather, Oh Blossom!

Oh heather, oh blossom,
such a bleak, bleak autumn.
Though my mind suffers gloom
you still tenderly bloom,
oh blossom!

Oh heather, oh blossom,
sadness is my burden:
there's love, there's death, there's autumn—
your eye, cerulean—
oh blossom! (Liiv 107)

And there are translations of poems with an East Asian-like brevity and terseness, which, if they had appeared a century earlier, when the originals were written, may even have placed Juhan Liiv among the pioneers of imagism (note the alliteration in the third line):

Autumn

Autumn wind
quivers on a limb,
huddles on the hay
like a beggar. (Liiv 125)

Triin Soomets (born in 1969), one of the freshest voices among women poets, writes with occasional rhymes, more often just ending lines with words which only slightly sound alike, possessing perhaps one or two similar phonemes within the same syllabic structure. Such applications of rhyme did emerge in much earlier authors, even in the middle phase poetry of Bernard Kangro, and they are often present in Arved Viirlaid, but on the whole that is a newer kind of phenomenon in Estonian letters. The bold surprises of irregular rhyme effects may remind one of certain turns of verse in Emily Dickinson, whom Soomets also resembles by the powerful persuasiveness of soaring associations (otherwise, by her frequent acridity Soomets stands closer to Sylvia Plath, but is more joyous). While composing in full rhymes is difficult in Estonian, and often disappointing, it is, however, in a way even easier for a translator to render such verse into regularly rhymed English. It is easier in the sense that the task remains in full view, and a settled rhythm of rhymes may help the mental processes in looking for the expectable. On the other hand, what the original poet does, rarely means looking for the expectable. Casual, random, or accidental rhymes like Soomets 's, require of the translator such an amount of congenial spontaneity, almost a full transference into the poet's flow of thinking, that the inspiration may easily run dry. Thus, choosing the safer path of euphonious but rhymeless verse, the translations by J. Talvet and H. L. Hix of not only the poems of Soomets, but also mostly of Paul-

Eerik Rummo (born in 1942), and, with very few partly rhymed exceptions, of Hando Runnel (born in 1938) and Juhan Viiding (all published, along with free verse by Andres Ehin, Jaan Kaplinski, Ene Mihkelson, Jüri Talvet, Mari Vallisoo, and Hasso Krull, in the anthology *On the Way Home*, in New Delhi in 2006) rarely attempt to catch and convey all the frolicsome play with full or half rhymes or other sound effects that more or less characterise those poets' original lyrical style. However, Talvet and Hix's translation of Paul-Eerik Rummo's prose poem "In Imitation and in Memory of Artur Alliksaar", with the abundance of assonances, alliterations and puns of the late senior poet's language poetry, comes amazingly close to conveying most of the rich mind acrobatics of the original, alike to accomplishing the seemingly impossible task of translating James Joyce's Finnegans Wake. A selection of the Surrealist poetry of Alliksaar's other disciple, Andres Ehin (born in 1940), *Moose*, *Beetle*, *Swallow*, translated into English by Patrick Cotter, was published in Cork, Ireland, in 2005. An English selection of the free verse, ethnically conscious, associative poetry of Kristiina Ehin (Andres Ehin's daughter, born in 1977) by the British Estonian Ilmar Lehtpere, *The Drums of Silence*, appeared, to a lot of critical acclaim, in Cambridge, UK, in 2007.

【Notes】

1. See William Forsell Kirby, *The Hero of Esthonia and Other Studies in the Romantic Literature of That Country* (London, Adamant Media Corporation, 1895).
2. See Ants Oras, *Kuus eesti luuletajat Ants Orase tõlkes* (Six Estonian Poets in Translations of Ants Oras. Comp. Anne Lange) (Tallinn: Tänapäev, 2002).
3. See Betti Alver, *Selected Poems*. Foreword by Mardi Valgemäe (Toronto, Estonian Centre International P. E. N., 1989).
4. See *Tuulelaeval valgusest on aerud. Windship with Oars of Light. Valik eesti moodsat luulet. Estonian Modern Poetry*. Comp. Doris Kareva (Tallinn, Huma, 2001).
5. Manuscript in Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu, Estonia.
6. See Jüri Talvet, *Of Snow, of Soul. New Selected Poems*. Trans. from the Estonian by H. L. Hix (Toronto, Guernica,2010).

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Translating from French Language into Estonian Literature

Katre Talviste

Abstract French literature has been translated into Estonian since the late 19th century. Some authors have been central to this tradition from the very beginning, and have considerably influenced the Estonian understanding of French literature, if not literature in general. Based on the history of the reception of a few such authors (Zola, Balzac, Baudelaire and Molière), the article shows in what ways the Estonian literary tradition has been nourished by this cultural contact and how reading French literature has grown an important part of it.

Key words translation history; history of Estonian literature; translations from French; Honoré de Balzac; Charles Baudelaire; Molière; Émile Zola.

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What Does Translation Have to Do with Literature?

The subject of this article in a collection of texts intended as a general introduction to the Estonian literature may seem somewhat arbitrary. Why speak of translations while the original Estonian literature is hardly known well and widely and the Estonian language, the actual vehicle of these translations, is not spoken or understood by a public large enough to influence the world-wide understanding of the French literature?

First, it could be argued that such an approach is encouraged by the methodological and ethical expectations of our discipline today. In recent decades, several developments in the field of literary studies have contributed to a favourable atmosphere for rethinking translation practices and their role in any given literary tradition. In the literary histo-riography and criticism increasing value has been attributed to phenomena formerly considered as peripheral or marginal. It could even be said that marginality, the otherness, has become a value in itself: historians of literature look for alternative points of view in order to give more visibility to texts, authors and processes neglected in the earlier histories and canons. In this process, culture, and the literary tradition as a part of it, has become to be regarded as more complex and polyphonic than was customary in the ethnocentric historiography influenced by the romanticist concept of nation. The constant presence of otherness within a culture considered as one coherent system with its own particular identity has been acknowl-

edged.

Translation is a form of such otherness. On one hand, it allows to introduce new, inno-vative elements into the target culture; on the other hand, it helps a culture to perceive its own specificity in the comparison with the Other (Torop 593). Although it is a general characteristic of translation, it is particularly important in young literary cultures where translations, many of which are made by great writers, can play a major role in the development of the original literature (Even-Zohar 120 – 122). Therefore, translation history is not only important to study in order to understand the phenomena directly connected with translation practices, but also for a better understanding of the development and functioning of the target culture. While the original and translated literature result from somewhat different series of creative acts, their perception by the reader is not necessarily different, and readers' perception of texts is an important element of the target literary tradition. Reception is as creative a process as the production of literature.

In this particular case there is also another, empirical reason to discuss translations of French literature into Estonian in order to describe the Estonian literary tradition. There are many actual parallels between the developments of both since the time the French literature appeared in the field of vision of Estonian translators, that is, since the late 19th century. Before that time, translated literature in Estonian was mostly of German origin and rather loosely adapted. The scope began to broaden in the 1880s, and a more scrupulous attitude towards the original started to develop at the same time. During that period, the Estonian literary field grew more articulate and conscious of itself as well: the first professional writers appeared, criticism developed, first literary works of lasting aesthetical value were produced.

This process of emancipation continued at the beginning of the 20th century, with important new elements appearing in 1905: in the form of the group Noor-Eesti "Young Estonia," the first literary group with a clearly stated program entered the literary field. Their albums, although not numerous or frequent enough to qualify as real periodicals, were the first widely distributed strictly literary collective publications and had considerable impact. In the field of translation, the Young Estonia movement insisted on quality both in selection of texts and execution of the work. They also founded a very influential publishing house in 1913. The beginning of the Young Estonia period saw also the creation of professional theatre in Estonia (1906, both in Tartu and in Tallinn). All these developments contributed to the formation of a more demanding and knowledgeable public.

Thus, the basic elements of a fully functioning literary field were in place when, in 1918, the independent Republic of Estonia was created. The new political situation made it possible for better education to be given in Estonian and for more sophisticated institutions to emerge (these soon followed: in 1919 Tartu University reopened with Estonian as the new teaching language, in 1922 the Writers' Union was founded, the next year the literary magazine *Looming* was created).

For the translations of French literature into Estonian this new context brought also new possibilities. By that time, the core of what has become the French canon in

Estonia, was already well-formed. In the 19th century, the Estonian press had discovered Guy de Maupassant, Jules Verne, Victor Hugo, Émile Zola and Molière, in the early 20th century – Maurice Maeterlinck, Alexandre Dumas, Anatole France, Voltaire and Charles Baudelaire. A total of 63 authors (including the all-time favourites Maupassant, Verne, Zola, Perrault, Molière, France, Dumas and Hugo) had been published in book format by 1918.

Over the next period, during Estonia's political independence (1918-1939), the Estonian literature explored many different poetics and attained a whole new quantitative and qualitative level. The same acceleration can be observed in translation from French: 73 new authors were published in book format, and many already known authors, such as Maupassant, France, Verne, Zola, Dumas, Hugo and Perrault, also Maurice Dekobra, Octave Mirbeau and Prosper Mérimée kept occupying the translators. Among the newly discovered writers, the most popular were Pierre Loti, Romain Rolland, Honoré de Balzac, Alphonse Daudet, André Maurois, Maurice Leblanc, Claude Farrère, Gustave Flaubert, Henri Barbusse, George Sand and Voltaire.

Thus, the French literature in Estonian grew steadily in numbers and in quality, remaining all the while centered on the 19th and early 20th century prose, mostly realism. At the end of the 1930s, a certain openness to some more modern tendencies can be perceived, but the Soviet standards for literature imposed thereafter did not allow for any actual opening. Instead, they perpetuated the realist poetics and socio-critical intentions that the pre-occupation translators and critics had already appreciated of their own accord.

In diversity and quantity, the war and the beginning of the Soviet occupation brought about a significant decline. During the first two decades of the occupation, books of only 15 new authors were published, many of these were dictated by the Soviet canon (Louis Aragon, Elsa Triolet, André Stil) or at least tolerated by it (Pierre Jean de Béranger, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry). That tolerance was naturally also the main condition for the preservation of the earlier canon. Balzac, Rolland, Hugo, Stendhal, Perrault, Molière, Dumas, France, Maupassant, Maurois, Flaubert and Verne could remain. They continued to be central to the canon, even though from 1960 till 1990 the diversity grew again. The most important new authors from that later Soviet period were undoubtedly Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre. Georges Simenon rose to a great popularity. The total number of new authors was 69.

While the effort gone into the voluminous Estonian versions of authors such as Stil or Béranger hardly corresponds to their role in the French literature, as far as the core of the canon is concerned, the Soviet era didn't as much change as freeze the history. That resulted, among other things, in a vigorous return to the old values and old texts after the regaining of independence. Authors were rediscovered, old translations reprinted. Sometimes that inspired a new interest in same authors, but often not.

In this general dynamics there are obvious parallels with the original Estonian literature: the 20th century slowly removes poetry and prose from their respectively romanticist and realist origins towards post-romanticist and post-realist poetics, without really entering a modernist or avant-garde aesthetics before the 1960s. The Soviet pe-

riod undoubtedly contributed to the slowness of the process, but not by a radical change of direction, rather by imposing to all writers and translators the most traditional and simple tastes in Estonia, and inspiring to writers in exile a strong feeling of nostalgic patriotism that made them attach to pre-war values and subjects related to matters mostly Estonian. Upon regaining the political independence, the literary field tried at the same time to reabsorb the pre-occupation heritage and many missed-out developments that had, in the meantime, taken place in the world literature.

Chronological parallels aside, in that light we could still ask how translations from French could play a significant part in Estonian literature that has for a long time been concerned with its role as a preserver of cultural identity, and has moved at a very different pace and through different experiences compared to French literature. In what way has this contact nourished the Estonian literary tradition, apart from being structured by the same circumstances and thus following similar dynamics? The answer ventured here will be given in form of three case studies, which lead to some conclusions as to why the Estonian literature has needed the French and in what way the Estonian reading of the French literature is interesting.

The Battle of Naturalism and the Reign of Realism

The very arrival of French literature in Estonia is motivated by processes in the Estonian literature: Zola is mentioned as an example, translated and later on continuously quoted as a positive or negative authority in the disputes that surrounded the early realist writings in Estonia.

The existence of the naturalist method was discovered by Estonian critics in the 1880s. In 1891, Ado Grenzstein published in his newspaper, *Olevik*, a story by Zola, translated from Russian. It was followed, at the turn of the century, by many other examples of Zola's work and by reflections of the local critics upon naturalist literature. These were often rather hostile, which attitude can at least partly be explained by the over-general and simplified meaning attributed to naturalism by the same critics: they concentrated on symptoms, not the method itself, pointing out the social and material ugliness and misery the naturalists depicted, and presenting this as an objective in and of itself. As is reported in 1911, the hostility sometimes went as far as removing Zola's work from libraries – his novel *Nana* (published in Estonian in 1907), was removed from the library of the education society of the Tarvastu parish.

From all that we learn, however, that Zola and his method, however loosely interpreted, were well known and his works translated and read widely enough to cause concern in those opposed to naturalist literature. Their opposition worked most likely in Zola's favour, constantly drawing attention to his name and attracting attention of the readers. By the 1920s, naturalism had made its way to the very history of Estonian literature. In his authoritative textbook *Eesti kirjandusloo peajooned* (*The Basics of the History of the Estonian Literature*, 1912 – 1936) Mihkel Kampmaa firmly establishes an already much-used parallel between Zola's work and that of Eduard Vilde (1865 – 1933) who is considered to be the first true realist writer in the Estonian literature. Kampmaa writes:

> Just as Zola has almost superstitious regard for all that bears the name of science, and hurries to hand out to others, as so many pieces of fresh bread, everything he has heard said in the name of science, believing it to be the last, uncontestable truth, so does Vilde, being an ignorant in science, give himself unreservedly in to the propaganda of historical materialism and socialist projects for a better world. (Kampmann 121)

But Kampmaa's criticism is less aimed against the naturalism than its simplified interpretations. He explains the naturalists' aim for scientific and detailed approach that sets naturalism apart from realism in principle, not only in the choice of subject matter (Kampmann 5 – 9). The reason he dwells so long on Zola and his school in a history of Estonian literature lies in the fact that naturalism had already been drawn into a loop of circular reasoning: while it was used to label certain Estonian authors, like Vilde, who tried to introduce a realistic approach into an overwhelmingly neoromanticist literature, naturalism was also perceived through their work, the original concept inseparable from its Estonian version.

This merged reading of French naturalism and Estonian prose became problematic for both at the beginning of Soviet occupation. It was a hostile period towards naturalism or what was defined as such. Even though Zola was described both before and after as a tireless fighter for democracy and workers' rights, during the Stalinist period his work and his method were subject to hard criticism for dwelling too much on insignificant details and not offering any "progressive" solutions to social problems described in novels. However arbitrary the Stalinist prescriptions for criticism, they contributed to rendering Zola's position in the canon ambivalent for a while, which is probably one of the reasons Balzac had a chance to rise beside and even above him in the Estonian literary tradition.

Nevertheless, in 1970s Oskar Kuningas still had reason to observe that Zola was the most often mentioned French author in histories of Estonian literature (Kuningas 876). Indeed, attributing naturalist poetics to Estonian authors has a long and varied tradition in spite of the controversial interpretation of naturalism. In addition to Eduard Vilde, Ernst Peterson-Särgava (1868 – 1958) is one of the principal authors so labeled in the relatively appropriate period, but naturalism has been found in Estonian prose throughout the 20th century, in the work of authors who represent very different periods, aesthetics and ideas and present similarities only on a rather superficial level, if that.

Thus we see that the term "naturalism," originally a name of a particularly precise and well-defined literary method, has grown into a very wide and general notion in Estonia and hardly implies any real comparison to the French naturalist school. When speaking of naturalism encountered in a work of literature, an Estonian critic is much more likely to have in mind a set of characteristics traditionally attributed to naturalism in Estonia (description of maximum number of ugly realities, for example), and to expect the audience to think of the same set of characteristics at the mention of the keyword, which the audience probably does.

Since Zola and his poetics had developed into the measure of bold, if controver-

sial, prose, it is understandable that a more stable landmark was bound to appear in the repertoire. That role was given to Balzac. Although preceding Zola in the actual chronology of literature, he was discovered much later in Estonia, the first translations (for example, *The Magic Skin*, *Eugénie Grandet*, *Father Goriot*) dating from the 1920s.

Soon after the first texts were published, accolades began to appear in the press. Where Zola had created a ground for comparison, more often than not a negative parallel, Balzac becomes a height to reach for, something to measure translators and Estonian novelists by. The critic Bernhard Linde, himself one of the first translators of Balzac, published a whole monograph about Balzac (Linde 1933), which is something extremely rare to happen for a French or any foreign author in Estonia. At the same time, another critic compared A. H. Tammsaare's newly completed 5-part novel *Tõde ja õigus* (*Truth and Justice*, 1926 – 1933) to Balzac's *Human Comedy* (Adson 1181). Tammsaare (1878 – 1940) was already the most highly regarded Estonian novelist, and the parallel is obviously intentioned as enhancing the prestige of both the local living classic and the earlier foreign one.

Unlike many other writers, Balzac gained only more attention and acknowledgement under the Soviet occupation, even during the Stalinist era. Having being appreciated by Friedrich Engels, he was among the first French authors the Estonian critics dared to begin to mention again after the Second World War. While the early realism was not quite the paragon of literature for the Soviet literary ideologists, it was considered a precursor to the much-praised and sought-after "critical realism", and thus Balzac continued to be set as an example and remained among the authorized objects of study and translation. Thus, a 15 – volume collection of his selected works was published in Estonian between 1955 and 1962. As a small curious testimony to the general acceptation of Balzac, a short story for youth from that decade (Jermakov 1969) uses reading of his selected works as a marker of a positive adolescent hero.

School, a powerful constructor of literary fame, had indeed also started to favour Balzac instead of Zola. The main school textbook on western literature published under the occupation observes that naturalist authors are reluctant to judge the society and its evils, they consider these as some sort of phenomenon to be studied with scientific detachment (Leht, Ojamaa 191). Nevertheless, by that time, well after the period of the worst Stalinist repressions and restrictions, Zola was reinstated in his status of a canonic author, an inspiring predecessor to the 20th century "critical realists" alongside Balzac.

Both these authors have remained part of the national curriculum, of which the latest version was adopted in 2010. Balzac is also among authors from whom an entire novel is recommended for reading as an example of realist literature. His *Father Goriot* is one of the five options suggested in the curriculum, the other four being Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Stendhal's *The Red and the Black* and Tammsaare's *Truth and Justice*. So not only is Balzac the model realist writer, French novelists are obviously regarded as the very core of realism.

The Challenge of Modernity

Another French author, who has become as emblematic as Balzac, although in a different way and in a different field, was discovered soon after naturalism and has been closely related to the latter in Estonia. In the first decade of the 20th century, members of the Young Estonia movement introduced the poetry of Baudelaire in their magazine. It was first done on the initiative of Johannes Aavik (1880 – 1973) who, as a linguist and radical language reformer, was attracted to the late 19th century French poetry mostly because of its creative approach to language (Aavik 196). Other translators and poets soon followed in Aavik's footsteps. By 1930, Baudelaire's poems, both in verse and prose form, had been published in Estonian in prestigious literary magazines, in periodicals destined for a larger public and as an independent book, the latter a translation of *Paris Spleen* by Marie Under (1883 – 1980), the most remarkable poet of that period.

In the second half of the 20th century, Baudelaire continued to attract the interest of eminent translators and poets, such as Gustav Suits (1883 – 1956), Johannes Semper (1892 – 1970), Ants Oras (1900 – 1982), August Sang (1914 – 1969), Jaan Kross (1920 – 2007), Ilmar Laaban (1921 – 2000), Ain Kaalep (b. 1926), Indrek Hirv (b. 1956), Tõnu Õnnepalu (b. 1962) and Märt Väljataga (b. 1965). During the Soviet occupation, translating Baudelaire's poetry constituted a sort of bridge between the two literary traditions that developed in Estonia and in exile. Later, in the 1990s, the renewed interest in his works was rather representative of a general eagerness to reestablish connections to the pre-war literary tradition.

In addition to many poems printed in various periodicals, several independent books of Baudelaire's poetry have been published. Three of them are anthological editions of verse poetry: the first established by August Sang in 1967 (contains translations by August Sang, Ain Kaalep, Ilmar Laaban, Ants Oras, Jaan Kross, Johannes Semper), the second in 2000 by Indrek Hirv (contains translations by Hirv, Oras and Sang), and the latest was published in 2009 by Ain Kaalep (contains translations by Ain Kaalep, August Sang and Märt Väljataga). There are also complete translations of *Paris Spleen* (new editions of Marie Under's translation were published in 1991 and in 1999) and *Flowers of Evil* (2000, translated by Tõnu Õnnepalu). As the most recent dates show, the interest in Baudelaire has still not faded.

This continuing interest has a few paradoxical points. First, for a long time there was next to no positive critical reception to accompany the translations. The first translator Aavik himself never let pass an opportunity to criticize Baudelaire's morals and world view that he had labeled "decadent" from the very beginning (Aavik 1905), thus establishing a long tradition of interpreting Baudelaire in particular and the late 19th century French poetry in general.

Why someone as skeptical as Aavik undertook translating Baudelaire is not quite clear, but it probably wasn't only because of some mysterious attraction of opposites, but also by a deliberate calculation. Aavik and his colleagues wished to bring about fundamental changes in the literary culture and tastes of their time. In order to set new horizons to the public, they needed to create a contrast with the existing ones. In

1905, Baudelaire was shockingly different from everything that was known as poetry in Estonian, and the shock had a lasting effect, even on the first translators themselves.

This role Baudelaire had to play explains the second paradox of his Estonian reception. On many occasions, and over many decades, his poetics are described as "naturalist" by the critics. While the actual creative methods of Baudelaire (and of all late 19th century poets claiming him as their mentor) and of Zola are fundamentally different, it is not altogether surprising that the two appear similar in the eyes of Estonian critics who, with Zola, have concentrated more on particular themes and tropes than the method. The idea both Zola and Baudelaire most clearly and deeply introduced to the Estonian literature was that literature was not supposed to be beautiful, but could also dwell on the ugly, the immoral and the miserable. The reasons these authors dwelt on such things belong to two different philosophical and spiritual universes they represent, but in the early 20th century Estonia their names and works were thrown together in yet another cultural universe that has ever since defined them by its own logic and needs.

What was taken from the 19th century French literature was not a method, a poetics or a world view. It was both less and more: a general sense of newness, a sort of declaration of rights for a literature that from then on refused to play its former role of simply educating and amusing people with nice, decent texts. The Young Estonia movement demanded throughout its roughly ten-year existence that the Estonian literature move on towards modernity. It has been disputed a lot among today's critics and scholars whether or not the Young Estonians were modernists—it was one of the biggest critical debates in Estonia in the 1990s. If we consider modernism as the literary and political avant-garde on the European scale, Young Estonia does not qualify, being far too moderate in both aspects. But in their understanding that modern literature is an independent cultural field that can explore ideas and images in spite of all previous conventions, the Young Estonians certainly stand at the beginning of modern Estonian literature. Baudelaire became an emblem in service of the emancipation and broadening of horizons they demanded.

Only as such, he might have had just a lasting impact. To explain his constantly renewed presence, there is a third element to be pointed out. Most of the translators of his works are among the great poets of their time, some are among the most productive translators of poetry Estonia has ever known. Yet, only about two thirds of his verse poems have attracted their attention more than once and most of their effort has converged on a dozen texts from *Flowers of Evil*. Bringing Baudelaire's texts to the Estonian readers doesn't therefore seem to be the translators' main objective when they turn to his works. Rather, they wish to launch themselves into a dialogue, or sometimes a confrontation, with other translators, and thus to establish their beliefs about Baudelaire and even more about translation and poetry in general. The latest Estonian collections of Baudelaire form an implicit, but clear debate about principles of translating poetry. Some translators stand for rigorous respect for form and particular poetic figures, others view original texts more as a starting point for free improvisation; some believe to find the author's true voice in the tension between the cool, balanced con-

struction of his verse and its content, others in his syntactic structures etc.

Baudelaire has become an "inside author" — an author for poets to test their mind and skills on. Perhaps it explains why proportionally very little critical attention has been paid to him. The generally accessible sources the Estonian readers could turn to in order to learn more about a poet eminently present in their cultural repertoire are not overly abundant. But the translations themselves become thus all the more significant: not only do they give the Estonian public a glimpse of a highly influential author in the whole western literature, they are also an expression of poetic quests and values of remarkable Estonian poets from all generations since the beginning of modernity.

The Taming of the Classics

While Baudelaire's works have remained a great attraction for outstanding poets, another author drew from the very beginning the attention of the larger public, and made his way into school textbooks, although no debates or interpretations of his work stand out in the context of Estonian literature. This author is Molière. The first of his plays to be staged in an Estonian-speaking theatre was *The Miser*, translated from German or Russian adaptions and played in 1886 in Tartu, by the company of August Wiera (Rähesoo 31).

The first staging of Molière didn't bring about an immediate popularity. It appears that among the classics the young Estonian theatre tackled, Shakespeare was the most popular (Kask 59), and while the fashion of stage adaptations of adventure novels brought even Jules Verne on stage in the late 19th century Estonia (Epner 29), the French playwrights were not among the most appreciated at that time. Even when the first professional theatres appeared in 1906, there was no sudden change. During the early years of Vanemuine, the professional company in Tartu, German-speaking authors made up 68,5% of translated repertoire, Scandinavian playwrights (Ibsen being the most prominent) 15,5%, and French plays constituted only 8%, although it was still more than the share of English or Russian theatre (Epner 37). The art director, Karl Menning, who led the theatre until 1914, tended to avoid the classics, considering them beyond his actors' skills at that time (Kask 146).

In Tallinn, the Estonia Theatre did venture into the demanding field of classical drama, but their author of choice was Shakespeare, whose plays began to appear regularly from 1910 (Epner 40). Only at the beginning of the 1920s did Estonia bring a Molière play to stage. Again, it was *The Miser* (Tormis 32), which had, by that time, become a sort of a token text of Molière and had, in 1923, been published as a book, translated anew by Reinhold Kask. The reviews were quite positive, mostly about the performance of Toomas Tondu in the role of Harpagon. However, the poet and critic Gustav Suits published an article in 1924, discussing Molière's works and their Estonian reception in more general terms. He stated that Molière's plays had gone more or less unnoticed by Estonian theatres and welcomed the newfound interest in Molière (Suits 13).

Said interest, no doubt inspired by the playwright's 300-year anniversary, was expressed by one more production in a professional theatre: a two-part show including

Georges Dandin and *The Mock Doctor* (translated by Marta Sillaots) in Draamateater. Here, however, the critics were much less favourably impressed (Tormis 87 – 88).

At the end of the decade, the Ugala Theatre in Viljandi gave yet another production of *The Miser* (Tormis 253). While the theatres took happily advantage of the availability and familiarity of this particular play, not all critics considered it the best or the most representative work of Molière. Thus, the young Ants Oras, who later became one of the most eminent literary critics, had reproachfully written after the publication of the book that the translator Reinhold Kask should have chosen one of the great verse comedies instead of *The Miser* (Oras 169).

However, the canon doesn't always build itself on the preferences of critics. *The Miser* had made it first to the Estonian stage and also to the Estonian bookshops, so it was only to be expected that the play made it also to the textbooks of literature. The first textbooks on western European literature (Peterson 1922; Jänes et al. 1936) have whole chapters about *The Miser*. The textbooks published later, under the Soviet occupation (Leht 1957; Leht, Ojamaa 1965), didn't abandon this play either, although there was an obvious intention to shift the attention from *The Miser to* the great verse comedies, such as *Tartuffe*, *Don Juan and The Misanthrope*, which had also been translated by that time. Some of that work had been done in the late 1930s, but Molière's reception gained also much by the volatile political context of the 1940s and 1950s and the war-time: both under the Nazi and the Soviet occupation the classics, such as Molière and the old favourite Shakespeare, were much staged (Epner et al. 2006: 67), since they were considered timeless and thus relatively harmless by both totalitarian regimes.

Even though the Molière-related repertoire has broadened with time, *The Miser* has not been forgotten. In 2000, it was staged in the Vanemuine Theatre in a new translation by Häidi Kolle. Seeing as there are only a handful of authors who have inspired Estonian translators to produce more than one version of one text, this is a most remarkable success. Molière has actually several works (*The Mock Doctor*, *The School for Wives*, *The Misanthrope*, *Tartuffe*) of which two different Estonian translations exist. This puts him with Balzac, Baudelaire, Flaubert, Hugo, Maupassant and Zola. The number of versions of *The Miser* boosts him into the company of Perrault, Dumas, Verne and France.

About these writers, there is no doubt that not only have they been adopted by translators, critics, teachers and textbook writers, but they have also been read among the general public. It is quite obvious for Molière as well, since the early days when the professional theatres avoided staging his plays.

The Miser was one of the two most often staged plays of the amateur theatre clubs in the early 20th century, the other being Schiller's *The Robbers* (Kask 122). It was staged, for example, by the drama club of the bicycle society Taara that was active in Tartu from 1901 till 1905 and was led by Karl Jungholtz, who was later to be the director of two professional theatres (Kask 104). There was also a production of *The Miser* by the sobriety society Võitleja in Narva in 1917 (Kask 230) and by an amateur theatre in Kuressaare in 1919 (Tormis 257). The most attached to Molière were the Estonian drama amateurs in Saint-Petersburg: in 1902 they staged *The Mock Doc-*

tor and *The Miser*, in 1908 *The Bourgeois Nobleman* and later on again The Miser (Samoilov 65 – 71, 114).

Such popularity led unavoidably to some rather superficial interpretations and labels. In 1909, the critic Bernhard Linde complains:

> An important — important especially in the eyes of an even more important colleague — Estonian literary scholar gave a lecture about Molière at some course intended mostly for school teachers, where he spent a quarter of an hour explaining and pointing out that "you see, Moli? re is an important playwright who wrote important plays", that he has been translated into all important languages in the world, that his importance will not diminish as long as the French literature plays an important role among the important literatures of the world. Such an introductory spectacle was then followed by a reading one of Molière's "most important" works — for that purpose, a Russian translation was used, which was claimed to be even "a lot better" than the French original — and thereafter the audience was supposed to be familiar with the characteristics and specific qualities of Molière's works. (Linde 226 – 27)

While Linde's frustration with empty declarations of importance can be understood, it hardly applies to all Molière's critics of that time with justice. Even though the interpretations were neither varied nor overly concerned with the more complex aspects of Molière's drama, they pointed rather unanimously out a way to make the foreign author of a long-ago period understandable in their contemporary context: Molière was cast as a critic of society and its injustices.

Thus his work was perceived already by the critics of an early Saint-Petersburg production (Samoilov 65). Later, already in a more authoritative text — a textbook on poetics — Karl Peterson explains *Don Juan* as a play directed against nobility (Peterson 110), a position easily understood by the contemporary Estonian public, fresh from the War of Independence and about to set their score with the Baltic German barons, long-time landowners and political elite in the Baltic region. Later, in the Soviet context, the same kind of readings of Molière guaranteed him a safe place in the canon.

Although a Molière made to serve anti-German or pro-Soviet political agendas may be a somewhat limited Molière, the fact that his texts lent themselves to such interpretations undoubtedly helped with their acceptation and adoption in the Estonian literary tradition. Molière could be read as a realist author and thus incorporated to the most strongly rooted poetic paradigm. A didactical, socially active intention could be perceived in his works, which was a merit often sought after by many literary critics before the Second World War and also under the Soviet regime. The cast of characters of a classical comedy — ordinary people with rather down-to-earth problems and humour — was closer to the Estonian public than the classical tragedy, and the prose form acceptable in comedy made Molière also more accessible to the early translators.

Thus Molière has not only become a fixture in the literary tradition (even the lat-

est national curriculum still confirms his place as one of the most representative authors of the whole drama genre, of the 17th and 18th century theatre and of the French Classicism). He has also come to represent the whole classical French drama in Estonia, giving to this faraway and fundamentally foreign form of literature a reassuringly familiar face.

How to Tell the Difference between Same and Different?

What of the cultural otherness, we could ask, if foreign authors take on a familiar face? For this familiarity, achieved by various means, is the key element in all the success stories of French literature in Estonia. In a way, it is always an important element in a successful translation, of course, but in this case it seems almost intentional. Not because translators have purposefully transformed the literature they have translated, but because the purpose of many translations has been to contribute to the building of the modern Estonian literary culture.

This is hardly surprising, since the available resources for that construction work were limited: translators being at the same time writers, critics and teachers of literature is more of a rule than an exception in Estonia, even today and all the more at the time when the authors discussed above were introduced. Because of this, if nothing else, it is difficult to imagine a translator working only for some kind of locally disinterested French cause, at some point, all of them have asked (some, like Aavik, openly, others perhaps more implicitly) what the Estonian literature could gain from their effort. And so the Estonian versions of French authors, at least of those with the longest history in Estonia, are all remodeled to fit in the local literary tradition.

This, however, is the very otherness we were looking for. Estonian literature may have adopted a lot of foreign authors for its own purposes, but in so doing it has shaped itself in ways that wouldn't have been possible otherwise, and has brought up generations of readers who consider the presence of foreign authors in their basic reading repertoire as something elementary.

The Estonian Zola, Balzac, Baudelaire or Molîcre may not be similar to the French ones, or any others for that matter, but they are as inseparable from the Estonian literary culture as the originals are from the French tradition. The already quoted national curriculum gives two options for reading in order to illustrate the drama genre: Molîcre's *Tartuffe* and Andrus Kivirähk's *Voldemar* (a play about a legendary actor and director Voldmar Panso, by one of the most popular contemporary writers in Estonia). As questionable as it is academically to put the first on a par with the latter and expect inexperienced readers to find the common elements in order to understand a whole genre, it is quite beautiful symbolically. In a way, this choice is between an old playwright, whose works have been part of school reading since the beginning of Estonian-speaking secondary education, and a contemporary playwright, who has only recently been established as a textbook author. The fact that the first is a French writer and the other an Estonian one matters little, since the objective is to teach new readers how to enjoy works of literature, not to distinguish their origin.

Those already well-read enough to be interested in such distinctions have their work cut out for them, perhaps for the whole next century. It may be an interesting

challenge for today's translators, critics and literature teachers to "translate" this self-evident and familiar French literature back into the differences there actually are between Molière and Kivirähk, between Zola and Baudelaire, between naturalism and general ugliness, and between the two literatures and cultures brought together in this web of literary relations.

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A Call for Love and Harmony

—— On Juri Talvet's Poetry and Prose

Hu Tianfu

Abstract Juri Talvet is a famous modern Estonian poet and writer, whose poetry collection *Estonian Elegy* and prose *A Call for Cultural Symbiosis*, translated from Estonian into English by H. L Hix, poet and scholar in the University of Wyoming, have been published by Canadian Independent Publishers Group. In his poems, the poet profoundly expresses his deep love for his motherland, his nation and the human race. In his prose, he appeals to the world for the cultural equality and symbiosis among different nations and cultures. He severely condemns big power's hegemony, cultural imperialism and the marginalization of the minorities, the vulnerable cultures and the poor countries, and he vehemently calls for a cultural symbiosis in the world. Consequently, these two books are very useful and necessary for the study of the writer's content, his creation concepts and for the research of the contemporary Estonian literature.

Key words Estonia; Juri Talvet; love; harmony; symbiosis

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Juri Talvet is a celebrated poet and scholar of contemporary Estonia. His poetry and prose enjoy a prominent position in contemporary Estonian Literature. He is not only a poet, but has also served as a faculty member at different universities. He once acted as a translator in Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, Spain, and the United States, and gave lectures in Finland, Norway, Spain, Poland, Sweden and the Netherlands. H. L. Hix, an American scholar of University of Wyoming, translated his collection into English. Juri Talvet's collection of poems *Estonian Elegy* and the essay collections *A Call for Cultural Symbiosis*, published by Independent Canadian Publishing Group, are very important in the research of this contemporary Estonian poet. The two books have an irreplaceable role in revealing the author's deep love for mankind and his strong appeal for the loving and harmony in the contemporary world which is still full of frequent unrest and turmoil.

First, Juri Talvet is a poet and writer, filled with great compassion, whose love contains the passion for his motherland, the nation, the culture, the people as well as the love of weak nations. This kind of love is reflected in almost all of his poems. The poem translator H. L. Hix once said: "(His poem) starts at the heart of human experience, love and death, and culminates in a vision of a new Europe, indeed a new

world, vivified by that experience" (Hix 10).

In the opening poem "Believe What Signs You Like", love crosses national and ethnic and linguistic boundaries, and finally becomes a common pursuit of mankind's vast expanse and solidarity. He writes, "No matter that your ancestors/ spoke another tongue/ a tongue that now no one knows/… you spoke to me in the oldest tongue/ darker than your dark hair" (Talvet, *Estonian Elegy* 11). To him, love is powerful and conquers all.

Human sympathy and love are an eternal theme in his poetry. In September 28, 1994, one ferry called "Estonia" sank in the Baltic Sea and more than nine hundreds passengers were killed in the accident. The author was deeply grieved after hearing the catastrophic news, which reminded him of the troubled history of his motherland and the people who had experienced various vicissitudes. Estonia's history was replete with bitter events and memories. With the population of more than one million, the country had once fallen into the hands of Denmark, Sweden, and Poland respectively, and it was merged into Russia at last. When the people are going to enjoy the freedom and happiness in their newly dependent country, dereliction of duty of the officials and disasters make everything become a fantasy. People cannot enjoy the freedom and democracy that they should have deserved. He says: "Liberty should have meant warmth at last, and joy." But where is joy He writes in anger, "Had there not been enough bowing already/to German lords, scions of Vikings, Russian wags? /… And now that the people had power in its hands/why could not the feast of the body's solace last forever?" Evoking by painful memories of the past and the enslaved life of the people, his heart was full of sadness: "We found ourselves back on the snowy Siberian plains/gnawing on permafrost" (Talvet, *Estonian Elegy* 12 – 13).

In this poem, he did not only mourn the deceased and express his infinite compassion for the weak countries, but also condemned the barbaric atrocities of the Crusaders. His thoughts of ecological ethics are well reflected here. "Where was Christ / when the Knights of the Cross killed/the children of Mary's Land and raped women and girls…" (Talvet, *Estonian Elegy* 13) "early tillers, at a time when others, the stronger, consumed their neighbors,/like an insatiable swarm of grasshoppers/discovered and plundered new continents/driven by hunger/by the dark – sweet womb of a foreign woman" (Talvet, *Estonian Elegy* 14). Even so, the Estonian forgave the villainies and "an Estonian stretched his hand to a drowning Russian" (Talvet, *Estonian Elegy* 16), since the poet or the Estonian is "interested only in life" (Talvet, *Estonian Elegy* 17).

The friendship between man and man is an essential part of human love. In his long poem "From Santiago's Road", he sings "I wish love and friendship could extend our clumsy age a little longer/At once I knew I loved you infinitely/in another rain/near the heart" (Talvet, *Estonian Elegy* 53). In "21st Baltic Elegy", he expressed his unlimited grief and mourn to his deceased friend, professor and writer Ivar Ivask. He writes leniently: "Oklahoma fell silent, the Baltic froze/From Kafka's offices came glassy gentlemen/The narrowing lappets of your Irish coat closed around you/Your blue-eyed childlike festinator to the future, Ivar" (Talvet, *Estonian Elegy* 61). His poem is reminiscent of "In Memory of W. B. Yeats", written by W. H.

Auden, in memory of Yeats. W. H. Auden writes in the beginning of his poem: "He disappeared in the dead of winter/The brooks were frozen/the airports almost deserted/ And snow disfigured the public statues/The mercury sank in the mouth of the dying day". [1]

Second, Talvet's great love of mankind is reflected in his collection of essays *A Call for Cultural Symbiosis*. In this book, he calls for equality between nations as well as between human languages and cultures, attacks power hegemony and cultural imperialism, condemns the modern technology that has caused disastrous consequences on nature and environment, calls on the harmonious mutualism between different cultures and nations, and appeals for the spiritual sense of globalization.

In his view, all languages of the world, however small, can contribute to the process of inquiring into the meaning of our life. He does not think that only these ancient languages such as Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, ancient Germanic, etc, have the privileges to make contributions to human civilization. Western civilization did not bring happiness to mankind. In his eyes, the Western civilization seems to have reached the extreme that the material benefits which could not be imagined before have become reality now. But the sharp contrast is that many people are still living in suffering now.

For the current globalization, the author has his own unique viewpoints. He holds the view that the so-called globalization is merely nominal, which lacks true cultural exchange and interaction. There exists no cultural diversity in the world but the culture of the superpowers. While the cultures from the superpowers have been taken seriously, those from the small countries have just been ignored. The same is true with the fate of writers from small countries. Therefore, some Asian and African writers have to create their works in the so-called "international language" instead of their mother tongues. As a result, they can no longer use their mother languages to write effectively and efficiently, which in turn proves the fact that they cannot make contributions to their national cultures any longer.

Talvet expresses his care and love for the younger generations by the way of criticizing the Western films, in particular, the violence in American movies. He believes that movies, especially the description of violence in animated films, have poisoned the hearts and souls of the younger generation. He says that since the independence of Estonia, movie channels have been stuffed with American movies. And he concludes that American cartoons have sown the seeds of violence in human's mind when they are very young(Talvet,*A Call for Cultural Symbiosis* 14). In his view, the emergence of 9.11 Event is not a coincidence but a symbolic event. It reminds people that the Western dream, which is based on exploiting "others", whether is the natural "others" in the direct sense or human "others" that are less developed in technology and equipment, and accumulating wealth, will never last.

Does mankind really benefit a lot from modern technology In the author's view, it is modern technology that has initiated the contemporary ecological crises and disasters. He believes that, in addition to being used to cure human loneliness and diseases, modern science and technology are tools of destruction and spreading evil on a large scale. No matter how advanced, technology cannot meet the essential human

needs, which can only be satisfied by literature and art, as literature and art are the main sources of human hope and faith. He advocates that we should be against those who stick closely to technology and those who presumptuously ruin nature for their own selfish purposes (Talvet, *A Call for Cultural Symbiosis* 10 – 11). He says that mankind introduces the natural law into human society and makes use of intelligence and technology during the process of struggling for survival, and all these turn mankind into a monster that initiates the mass destruction of nature. He condemns western philosophy, as it defends anthropocentricism which is responsible for ecological crises.

In the author's view, Norwegians are smart. They know how to treat nature friendly and how to take a low-carbon journey. "(The Norwegian) does not rush on like a profit-greedy civilized barbarian-as a tiger-but understands that the greatest progress in the world in our days can only be the preservation of life on the earth" (Talvet, *A Call for Cultural Symbiosis* 34). He speaks highly of the Norwegian government minister for his going to work by bike. In the author's words, such kind of behavior is worth following, especially in an era when consumption is advocated and people tend to show off their wealth eagerly.

He holds the idea that globalization should be different from the one that has aimed for the conquering of world since Renaissance. Instead, it should be one in romantic and spiritual sense, which can in turn protect human diversities in many aspects, such as ethnic diversity and cultural diversity.

In a word, it is clear that Talvet demonstrates to the world his philosophy of poetry and deep love for mankind in his poetry and prose. Criticizing hegemony of superpowers, cultural imperialism, and the natural destruction caused by the Western science and technology, he declares his ideas about ecological ethics. He mainly advocates a co-existence of different cultures without acculturation and elimination of individuality. He calls for a harmonious existence of different cultures in eternal dialogues. Therefore, to understand the contemporary Estonian literature, it is worthwhile reading those works by Talvet.

【Note】

1. For the e-text of Auden's poem "In Memory of W. B. Yeats", log onto the website, http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15544.

【Works Cited】

Talvet, Juri. *A Call for Cultural Symbiosis*. Trans. H. L. Hix 1st ed. Toronto: Independent Publishers Group., 2005.

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责任编辑:杨革新

“诗歌与诗学的对话:中美诗歌诗学协会第一届年会”将在武汉召开

2007 年在武汉成功举行的“20 世纪美国诗歌国际学术研讨会”有力地推动了中国的美国诗歌研究和中美诗歌的交流。本次会议出版了由 70 余篇中外学者撰写的会议论文论文集并被美国 CPCI(原 ISSHP)全文收录,同时催生了 2008 年成立的以美国宾夕法尼亚大学为基地的中美诗歌诗学协会(CAAP),成为中美诗歌交流史上的大事件。为进一步推进中国、美国以及世界诗歌和诗学的交流,促进世界文学创作和研究的繁荣与发展,中美诗歌诗学协会、宾夕法尼亚大学、华中师范大学、《外国文学研究》、《世界文学研究论坛》杂志等多家国内外学术机构将于 2011 年 9 月 29 – 30 日在中国武汉共同举办“中美诗歌诗学协会第一届年会”,协会会长、斯坦福大学玛乔瑞·帕洛夫教授,协会副会长、宾夕法尼亚大学查尔斯·伯恩斯坦教授和华中师范大学聂珍钊教授等众多中外著名诗人和学者将出席会议,就诗歌的创作与研究展开对话和研讨。在此,我们诚邀国内外学者和诗人拨冗莅临本次会议。

一、会议议题

1. 玛乔瑞·帕洛夫诗学研究
2. 查尔斯·伯恩斯坦与语言诗
3. 诗歌经典的重读与阐释
4. 声音、表演、文本:诗歌艺术的疆界
5. 21 世纪诗歌中的身份问题
6. 诗歌与现代媒体
7. 诗歌译介理论

二、会议语言:英语、汉语

三、提交论文摘要截止时间:2011 年 8 月 20 日

四、会议时间与地点

报到:2011 年 9 月 28 日,华中师范大学桂苑宾馆大厅

会议:2011 年 9 月 29 – 30 日

五、成果出版

会后出版论文集,并将申报 CPCI(原 ISSHP)收录;论文将择优发表在《外国文学研究》、《世界文学研究论坛》等期刊。

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Call for Papers

Dialog on Poetry and Poetics:

The 1st Convention of Chinese/American Association for Poetry and Poetics
in Honor of Prof. Marjorie Perloff's 80th Birthday

The 2007 International Conference on 20th Century American Poetry in Wuhan, China, inaugurated a new era for American poetry study in China and for the exchange of poetry between China and America. The landmark conference proceedings included over 70 essays by authors from around the world. The conference also led to the formation of the Chinese/American Association for Poetry and Poetics (CAAP), based at the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing (CPCW). In order to facilitate academic exchange and to promote poetry and poetics of (and beyond) America and China, CAAP will co-host "Dialog on Poetry and Poetics: The First Convention of the Chinese/American Association for Poetry and Poetics" (Wuhan, China, September 29-30, 2011) with CPCW at Penn, Central China Normal University, *Foreign Literature Studies* (AHCI journal) and *Forum for World Literature Studies*. CAAP President Marjorie Perloff, professor of Stanford University and fellow of American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS), CAAP Vice-president Charles Bernstein, Professor of University of Pennsylvania and fellow of AAAS, and CAAP Vice-president Nie Zhenzhao, professor of Central China Normal University and vice-president of China National Association of Foreign Literatures, will attend the conference together with many other scholars from America, China and other parts of the world. We hereby sincerely invite all scholars and poets of the world to this grand academic occasion.

I. Topics

1) The Critical Writings of Marjorie Perloff: Retrospective Readings of the Works
2) Charles Bernstein and L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E
3) Reinterpretations of Poetry Classics: Canons New and Old
4) Sound, Performance, Text: the Boundaries of Poetry
5) Issues of Identity in 21st-Century Poetry
6) Poetry and New Media
7) The Poetics of Translation

II. Conference Languages: English and Chinese

III. Deadline for Abstract Submission: August 20, 2011

IV. Time and Place of the Convention:

Registration: September 28, 2011
Guiyuan Hotel, Central China Normal University, Wuhan
Conference: September 29-30, 2011

V. Publication of conference essays:

1) Selected essays will be published in journals: *Foreign Literature Studies* and *Forum for World Literature Studies*;
2) Proceedings will be published after the conference.

VI. Send abstract proposals to, or request more information from:

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