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Paradigms of Style: A Study of Zulfikar Ghose's Novels

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PARADIGMS OF STYLE: A STUDY OF ZULFIKAR GHOSE'S NOVELS

PARADIGMS OF STYLE: A STUDY OF ZULFIKAR GHOSE'S NOVELS

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in English

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ABSTRACT

This study deals with Zulfikar Ghose's—an expatriate English language writer of Pakistani origin living in the USA—novels. In this study, I focus on, among other things, the writer's negotiation with style and socio-politically provocative subject matter. I study Ghose's novels in a “good old fashioned way” in which I analyze his work by exploring his achievement as an artist, both in terms of style and socio-political subject matter. The focus is, precisely, to highlight the writer's correspondence between language and reality.

This dissertation is approved for recommendation
to the Graduate Council.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to Fozia.

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Introduction

Zulfikar Ghose's over five decades of sustained literary activity eschews, in most of his writings, an explicit response to the major events of his time: the partition of India, the break up of Pakistan which resulted in the creation of Bangladesh, the Cold War, and most recent of all the 9/11 bombings. As a human being he is touched by the events of the partition of India, but he does not take up sides in a political sense. He is sorrowful over the carnage in East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, and what is happening in Pakistan today makes him pensive. But more importantly, he does not capitulate to the Cold War discourse backed by capitalism. Ghose is not, in the usual postcolonial studies sense, a political writer. In other words, he is not committed to any political ideology and resistance strategies. Yet, his work highlights, among other things, structures of authority, and exploitation of all kinds—religious, political, and economic. In sensibility, Ghose's work is full of reverberations, meditative, and finds expression in a style that is fastidious and scintillates the reader's mind with brilliance. His genius resides in the creation of a language that is lyrical and full of vivid imagery. The beauty of the images of his native land, the Punjab, the South American landscape, and the fragrance of the jungles of the Amazon create a shiver between the 'shoulder blades.' In his experimentation with form, he (to use Pound's phrase) 'make[s] it new.' His literary journey from the mimicry of the nineteenth-century realism to the most experimental and ambitious works such as *Hulme's Investigations into the Bogart Script* and *The Triple mirror of the Self* reflects his wide range of experimentation with form and style.

Ghose's experimentation with form and his struggle to find a unique style does not mean that he merely submits himself to novelty. Likewise, he does not succumb to

the provincial ideas of nationalism and binary positions of the East vs. the West, colonial vs. colonized, center vs. marginal, so on and so forth. To be precise, Ghose keeps himself away from the austerity of postcolonial urgency. What remains central in Ghose is, as we shall see in the subsequent pages of this study, his obsession with form and a struggle to find a style for his provocative subject matter.

Ghose's work is full of socio-political material. But, with the exception of his first two novels, he does not compromise his style at the cost of content. His paramount consideration remains 'how it is said' rather than 'what is said.' This study, among other things, investigates the structural patterns in the novels of Ghose that give each of his works its peculiar aesthetic design. This study notes that in spite of the author's obsession with style, his subject matter is of great significance to contemporary socio-political reality. Without falling into the temptation of the truthfulness of Ghose's work to geographical settings and autobiographical experiences, I have made an effort to show Ghose's negotiation between his style and the reality his works reveal: the reality of the traditional and non-traditional structures of authority and exploitation in all its forms and manifestations.

I make my way between Ghose's preoccupation with form and style and his spurring subject matter which is relevant to contemporary society, highlighting his evolution as a writer. Respecting Vladimir Nabokov's advice in his *Lectures on Literature* on showing "kindness to authors" (1), I respect Ghose's dismissal of nationalistic category and all other categories of literature. Therefore, I do not want to prove that he is an Indian, Pakistani, British, American, and or postcolonial writer. I acknowledge that this study is simultaneously a reading of his novels in a "good old

fashioned way” in which a writer is appreciated for his work only by exploring his achievement as an artist, both in terms of style and content. The emphasis is, precisely, on the relationship between language and reality. But before elaborating on this argument, and given that Ghose is a relatively unknown author, it is pertinent to have a brief account of his life and work.

Life and Work: An Overview

Ghose was born to Muslim parents in Sialkot in 1935, now in Pakistan. As opposed to the violent and traumatic years of the 1940s, Ghose's early years in Sialkot were relatively placid. Sialkot, unlike Bombay (now Mumbai), where Ghose and his family migrated to it in 1942, was rural and agrarian. The city had not then undergone industrialization and modernization. In his autobiography, *Confessions of a Native-Alien*¹ (1965), one can feel a slow pace of life there:

... an avenue leading out of Sialkot, gracefully lined with trees, which in my imagination look like poplars. A graveyard where an old man is praying in the shade of a tree. The tall, profusely sweating peanut-vendors who chanted their presence in the streets. The potter's house which I passed every day, the potter at his wheel, his hands always in front of him, moulding clay. (21)

Ghose left Sialkot when he was seven years old, but this dreamlike vision, tinged with sadness, of Sialkot captures the routine life of the ordinary people there: the decrepit man praying, the peanut-vendors struggling to make their living by trying to sell peanuts, and the poor potter's back-breaking job who works every day suggests the plight of the people still true half a century later. This somber vision of the poor in the rural Punjab is translated at a larger scale in his second novel *The Murder of Aziz Khan*.

¹ From this point on, I will refer to this book as *Confessions*.

In 1942, he moved along with his family to Mumbai, where he attended a missionary school. The time in which Ghose was born was marked by the struggle for the independence of India. The movement resulted in the partition of British India into contemporary India and Pakistan. So, the period was characterized by brutal communal violence between Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. Ghose, at the time of partition in 1947, was living in a predominantly Hindu city, Mumbai. That was naturally a time of fear for a Muslim boy in the volatile milieu there. Remembering those moments Ghose says: “Walking down the street in the morning, one would find the hacked limbs of a man lying on the pavement. Lorries, collecting dead bodies, would pass by the streets as though they were collecting garbage cans” (*Confessions* 31). This reflects the tyranny, decadence and decay in human values on the eve of the partition.

Ghose and his family emigrated to England in 1952. The period in England, also unlike Mumbai, was marked by economic prosperity for his family, and later economic struggle for both Ghose and his family. This period, however, was intellectually rewarding for him. Ghose met with acclaimed writers, and committed himself to a writing career. He graduated in English and Philosophy from Keele University in 1959. He edited *Universities' Poetry*, and also did a number of other jobs: he served as a cricket correspondent for *The Observer*, reviewer on *The Guardian*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, and *The Western Daily Press*, and also taught high school students. Between 1952 to 1969, he published two books of poetry, *The Loss of India* (1964), and *Jets from Orange* (1967); a collection of short stories with his friend B.S. Johnson, *Statement Against Corpses* (1964); and an autobiography, *Confessions of a Native-Alien* (1965). He

also wrote two novels during this period—*The Contradictions* (1966), and *The Murder of Aziz Khan* (1967).

In 1969 Ghose migrated to the United States, when he was invited to teach at the University of Texas at Austin. He has been living there since. During this time he has published nine novels under his own name, in addition to *The Texas Inheritance* (1980), which was published under the pseudonym of William Strang. His nine novels are as follows: *The Incredible Brazilian*, a trilogy which comprises *The Native* (1972), *The Beautiful Empire* (1975), and *A Different World* (1978); *Crump's Terms* (1975), *Hulme's Investigations into the Bogart Script* (1981), *A New History of Torments* (1982), *Don Bueno* (1983), *Figures of Enchantment* (1986), and *The Triple Mirror of the Self* (1991). He wrote critical works too, including *Hamlet, Prufrock and Language* (1978), *The Fiction of Reality* (1984), *The Art of Creating Fiction* (1991), *Shakespeare's Mortal Knowledge* (1993), *Beckett's Company* (2009), and *In the Ring of Pure Light* (2011). Poetry books include *The Violent West* (1972), *A Memory of Asia* (1984), *Selected Poems* (1991), and *Fifty Poems* (2010). He also wrote a short story book, *Veronica and the Gongora Passion* (1998). Ghose has a few unpublished novels, too, which are lying with the Harry Ransom Center of the University of Texas, Austin. The unpublished novels are *The Deccan Queen*, *The Frontier Province*², *The Desert Republics*, and *Kensington Quartet*. In addition, he has an unpublished play called *Clive of England*, and an unpublished book of criticism *Proust's Vision of the Beloved*. There are a number of other uncollected poems, short stories and essays as well.

² Ghose says that there might be another version of *The Frontier Province* which he previously titled *Rajistan, Texas*. Message to the author. 6 April 2012. E-mail.

Ghose's Ideas on Art, Literary Criticism, and Colonialism

In order to evaluate Ghose as an English language writer, it is necessary to discuss, at least briefly, some of his controversial ideas on art and artists, teachers and learners, colonialism and postcolonialism. Ghose is one of the most accomplished English language writers today. But, he is an enigmatic literary figure whose unflinching stance in favor of form as opposed to ideas and content has cost him the readership that he otherwise deserves. In his book *The Art of Creating Fiction*³ (1991), he clearly establishes his vision of the parameters of great art. Ghose is a stylist, who, in his critical books, especially, *Art*, has acknowledged the example and critical thinking of Flaubert, Henry James, Proust, Nabokov and Virginia Woolf as being crucial to his own development as a writer. In his essays and lectures, Ghose has repeatedly emphasized what he calls the paramount importance of aesthetic design. Quoting a passage from Proust in a lecture at the University of Arkansas Fayetteville titled, "On Being a Native-Alien: The Question of a Writer's Identity," he reiterated two of Proust's phrases when he declared, "Quality of language and the beauty of an image are the heart of great writing" (12).

If a writer wants to have a unique voice in a piece of fiction, Ghose suggests the creation of a language which should "essentially be a body of images" (*Art* 3). As he acknowledges in this book, this is not a new position on creating literature; many great writers, such as Marcel Proust, have propagated this notion. Ghose despises a piece of art which champions a cause or message at the cost of form. Therefore, he dismisses, for instance, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck and the likes for their search for subject

³ From this point on, I will refer to this book as *Art*.

matter to write a novel. Ghose has serious issues with Hemingway's style of writing, noting:

Early in the history of the English novel, there appeared a work called *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe. In it, Defoe hit upon a fascinating scheme: take an Englishman, place him in a hostile foreign setting, and make him survive. Over two centuries later, you take that formula, replace the Englishman with an American (or a group of Americans), and you write *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, *A Farewell to Arms*, and *The Sun Also Rises*, and the idiotic public, never looking beyond subject matter and easily flattered by seeing images of itself, readily gobbles it up. (*Art* 107)

One may not agree with Ghose's point of view on Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, but he raises an important question of self absorption and sensationalism in approaching a piece of fiction in which "seeing images of itself" represents, in fact, a kind of narcissism.

Far from being narcissistic and self-centered, Ghose offers a detached involvement with a literary text. He shows us, for instance, how the "*Crusoe* formula" is used successfully both by Melville and Conrad. He argues:

... with them [Melville and Conrad] the imagination seems compelled by some mythical force and the discovered imagery has an oceanic depth in the universal human memory, whereas with the lesser writers like Hemingway the formula is merely exploited in order to appeal to the taste of what Henry James called 'the great gossiping, vulgar-minded public'." (*Art* 107)

In these lines Ghose not only criticizes Hemingway, but also highlights how old subject matter can be beautifully used to make a great piece of art. Furthermore, at the outset, at least, he argues for reflexivity, that a writer should not care about the reader, the general herd and its concerns. In other words, the writer's business is not to present what is interesting for the public but what is in the interest of art.

Ghose claims that a piece of art stands by itself. He highlights the "interior area of torments that is constantly in a beclouded, turbulent atmosphere" (*Art* 6). However, he

demands a distinction between an art that stands for affliction and personal pain alone as opposed to the one that is not obsessed with personal anguish but still transforms that pain into an objective outer reality. For sociopolitical concerns Ghose recommends: “leave the important issues of the time to journalism and television talk shows and if you're really enraged by an issue and feel a pressing need to be involved then take up politics” (*Art* 35). This does not mean that Ghose's work completely ignores sociopolitical concerns. But for him these concerns are incidental, they are ‘by-products’ of art, and do not drag the writer into the political quagmire of the postcolonial world. Still, one might argue that this sort of aestheticism is in fact complicity with the political domination because of the statement’s seemingly arrogant indifference to the depiction of the societal problems in a work of art. However, Terry Eagleton’s comments are thought provoking. He states, “the aesthetic as custom, sentiment, spontaneous impulse may consort well enough with political domination; but these phenomena border embarrassingly on passion, imagination, sensuality, which are not always so easily incorporable” (28). This is an important comment on the inherently subversive nature of art.

In this regard, Ghose is in line with James Joyce and Samuel Beckett, as opposed to T.S. Eliot. M. Keith Booker in *Literature and Domination* (1993) mentions that “Eliot’s reaction to the breakdown of authority in modern society is to attempt to restore the authority of the past and thereby to reinforce structures of power that he sees as tottering on the brink of total dissolution” (2). Although Ghose praises Eliot for his idea of ‘tradition and individual talent,’ Ghose’s own work, on the contrary, defies the structures of exploitation that are set to alienate human beings. This breakdown of

society is effectively portrayed in Ghose's *Crump's Terms* and in a humorous way in *Hulme's Investigations into the Bogart Script*. Such a phenomenon, according to Booker, "illustrates the central involvement of literature with issues of power, authority, and domination" (*Literature* 3). This sort of position, at least at the surface level, is diametrically opposed to Ghose's own critical framework. But Ghose also argues that "Language and reality appear in my mind as two figures in a courtly dance, reaching towards each other, coming into a momentary formal contact, then inevitably parting and receding from each other until the music gradually fades into silence" (Dasenbrock and Jussawalla, "A Conversation" 142). Thus, a complementary juxtaposition of language and reality gives literature what Booker calls "real subversive power" (*Literature* 3). And juxtaposition of language and reality is fundamental to Ghose's art. This is why I place an emphasis on Ghose's correspondence between style and subject matter.

Nonetheless, Ghose's formulations about art make us ask the question of whether or not Ghose is aware of the postcolonial experience. I suggest that he is. The treatment of socio-historical realities in his Brazilian trilogy, for example, and some of his subsequent novels, is testimony to this. But he does not want it to be the determining factor of his writings. Therefore, Ghose's position in the postcolonial era today is problematic, for he negates both colonial and postcolonial politics in literature. He says, "Art is not an Equal Opportunity Employer and literature cannot be expected to fulfill some Affirmative Action Programme" (*Art* 155). He further elaborates:

A group of novels by South African writers, for example, makes for a semester's package tour of racial guilt, moral outrage and historical enlightenment, and the eager economy class students, who are more anxious about their grades than about their culture, don't even realise that the ride they're being taken on has nothing to do with literature. (*Art* 58-9)

This is a remarkably bold statement to make, especially at a time when much of literary studies are confined within the post-imperialist guilt. There is no doubt that in the twentieth century some of the best literature was produced in the former colonial outposts. Thus, this is not to look down upon the cultural production of the former colonies, and make them look inferior; but to admit that there are certain pressures on the critical minds and on critics in 'metropolitan' academia to accept and appreciate mediocre art on the basis of often rather narrow nationalistic categories, with overt stress on the 'political' agendas and frequently misleading generalizations inherent in such texts.

What is expressed in the above quotation is a glimpse of Ghose's contempt for contemporary critical practice in the classroom. What will follow now, let me accept at the outset, is an extremely unpleasant critique of a literary critic. Ghose suggests:

You may follow what religion you like, that is between you and the idols on your private altar; but if you insist upon corrupting literature with your deconstructionist or feminist or any other ideological point of view then you are no different from the polyester-clad mums and dads who appear each year at the textbook hearings and insist that creationism be taught in the place of evolution, and what you do not realize is that, in spite of all your sophisticated jargon, you are essentially dumb and deserve the contempt in which writers hold you. (*Art* 34)

Ghose does not stop here; to further highlight his rejection of the contemporary critical practice, he quotes Flaubert who in a letter to his mistress Louise Colet states that "It doesn't require much brains to be a critic" (qtd. in *Art* 34). Although Ghose makes his point by invoking great artists of the past such as Flaubert, it is rather frustrating for a literary critic. But I must admit that Ghose's critique of the contemporary critical practice is couched in a language at once pitying and sparkling. More important, it is also a fact

that in contemporary critical practice, while dealing with ethnic writers in particular, there is very little attention to the artistic beauty of a work.

I agree with Ghose that critics ignore literary merit of a work, and focus on trendy issues of the time. But my concern against a certain type of, for instance, postcolonial criticism has another dimension. In spite of the critic's talk extending over the domains of identity, multiculturalism, and giving "voice" to the marginal, is essentially superfluous; it is merely a slogan which conceals the society's real subjugation at the hands of the few. But it is worth mentioning that, although such critical practice presents a radical posture to addressing the concerns of the marginalized, it is not the case. Critical theory, as Aijaz Ahmad rightly points out, has become "a conversation among academic professionals" (*In Theory* 2). Coming from a former colony, I believe that much in the critical practice is irrelevant to the former subjects, and creative writers in the once British India. Think about what, someone coming from South Asia, for example, has to do with an elaborate talk on multiculturalism and hybridity when a majority of the people in the region are suffering poverty, and, among other miseries, do not have access to clean drinking water. Ahmad argues, "a majority of the population [of the postcolonial world] has been denied access to such benefits of modernity as hospitals or better health insurance or even basic literacy; can hardly afford the terms of such thought" (*In Theory* 68-9). In his recent book, *The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path of American Power* (2008), Tariq Ali discussing malnutrition in Pakistan states that "60 percent of children under five [are] moderately or severely stunted" (1). Worse still, the exploitation of the local elite, feudal and industrial, military and civil accompanied with the politics of uniforms and dynasties, and religious fanaticism which is complicit with the capitalistic greed is hardly ever

discussed. Thus, the real issues of economy, capitalistic greed, and exploitation of the working class are ignored.

I want to emphasize further that though the literary critics generally seem concerned with cultures and societies, they do not really ask hard questions about gender, class, civilizations, and cultures. Perhaps this has to do with the much in vogue idea of 'political correctness.' This is not to suggest that Ghose, in his critical work, does raise hard questions about different cultures and societies. He does not even pretend that he cares about the world. He sits in his ivory tower, and is proud to be an elitist. His creative works, in this case novels, do, however, portray the issues of exploitation but not at the cost of style.

However, Chelva Kanaganayakam, in his book *Structures of Negation: The Writings of Zulfikar Ghose*⁴ (1993), claims that "Ghose is hardly apolitical" (4). Indeed, as suggested earlier, Ghose's work is full of socio-political matter. But the content, as suggested earlier, is not independent of his style. And Kanaganayakam, here, means that Ghose is political in a postcolonial sense. He further argues that Ghose is aware of the circumstances that led him into exile from his homeland to England. In support of his argument Kanaganayakam quotes Ghose as saying: "No one in the history of the planet has plundered, devastated and brutalized land and humanity more than did the Europeans from the time that Columbus sailed looking for India in the wrong direction to the time the British went starboard home in the right direction" (4). Indeed this reflects Ghose's understanding of history and the major players in it. What precedes these lines which Kanaganayakam quotes is the harshest criticism of the English and their colonization of

⁴ From this point on, I will refer to this book as *Structures*. I am grateful to the author for allowing me to quote from this book. I have benefited immensely from this work.

India. In *Beckett's Company* Ghose says, "the English had their own whore. The great cow India." He further adds that "second sons and unmarried daughters [of the English] went sailing to Calcutta ... for an easy change of fortune and to have their petty melodramas later chronicled by their third-rate novelists" (24). It requires no feat of imagination that Ghose here refers to E.M Forster, and his *A Passage to India* (1924). Ghose considers Forster a lesser novelist; however, it is worth mentioning that Ghose's first novel, *The Contradictions*, has much in common with *A Passage to India*⁵.

Nonetheless, going back to the issue of colonization, Ghose, at the same time, admits to the contributions made by the Europeans. Thus, after narrating the exploits of the Portuguese, French, Spanish, Dutch, and the English, he argues that "it would be foolish, if not stupid, not to acknowledge that the world is an infinitely better place because of the European than it would have been if it had been left to the Indians or the Egyptians or the Mayans" (*Beckett's Company* 27-8). This is a highly debatable argument. Especially, in the present day context, this is an extremely politically incorrect statement that can surely attract, among other things, adverse criticism on the "crime" of being non nationalistic. But, we have to remember that nationalism for Ghose and in his work is simply nonexistent. We can come up with the same parallel in one of the most prominent Urdu poets, Mirza Ghalib (1797-1869). Ghalib's diary, *Dastambooh*, records the brutality, and ruthlessness of the resistance movement, as well as iron handedness of the British against the locals. Aijaz Ahmad mentions that "Ghalib, like many other Indians of the time, admired British, and therefore Western, rationalism as expressed in constitutional law, city planning, and more" (*Ghazals* xiii). By extension, I argue that

⁵ I will come to this aspect in chapter one of this study.

what is considered as a demerit of most of the English language writers from South Asia—for their lack of militant ideological response to the colonization of India—from the local critics, in particular, is in fact a tradition—of keeping literature away from narrow nationalistic dilemmas—that can be traced within the writings of the vernacular writers as well.

There are certain hard facts, in India, for example, that must be acknowledged. Despite the Mughals' tremendous contribution in art and architecture, their rule failed to establish a single primary school for the poor public. Most left wing historians in the region such as Mubarak Ali and K. K. Aziz will testify to this assertion.⁶ There is no doubt that the British found India in a chaos, but it is another thing to say that they left it in the same chaos. Thus, this does not mean that Ghose's work becomes 'political' in the sense of postcolonial studies' politics because of his realization of the 'plundering' and looting of the Europeans.

Apart from Ghose's peculiar sense of history, his conception of reality largely formulates the basis of his thesis about art. The search for reality in art, according to him, could lead one to despair. In his critical book *Hamlet, Prufrock and Language* (1978), Ghose, placing great emphasis on the word 'speak' in *Hamlet*, comments that the ultimate purpose of literature is "to test relationships between language and reality. If we could only hear or speak or arrive at the words which explained, we would know; and having the illusion that there is a necessary correspondence between language and reality,

⁶ In recent times, this has become a contested argument. Interestingly, some Western historians like William Dalrymple are of the view that the Mughals contributed a great deal to the educational system in India. But we should not confuse *maktabs* and *madressahs* with primary schools and universities. Ismat Riaz's article, "The Mughal Legacy." *Dawn*: Pakistan, 27 Feb. 2011 talks about this controversy. <http://www.dawn.com/2011/02/27/the-mughal-legacy.html>

we are driven to despair when our words seem to reveal nothing” (8). Thus Hamlet’s problem, according to this view, is his inability to find meaning in his life because language explains nothing to him.

For Ghose reality does not mean the immediate socio-political reality only; rather he takes up the question of reality at a different level when he says that reality can be seen in diminished things. In 1991, Ghose visited Pakistan after twenty eight years, and described his experiences in his essay “Going Home.” Talking about his visit to the Peshawar Museum, he states:

At the Peshawar Museum I was struck by the power of the incomplete statue of the fasting Buddha to fix the itinerant self in a timeless and bodiless space. The missing parts of the statue appear to have a vital presence ... that which is not there startles the mind with the certainty of its being; it is an image of amazing contradictions, and illustrates the essential ambiguity of all perception: reality can be composed of absent things, the unseen blazes in our minds with a shocking vividness. (15)

This is an interesting passage, for not only does it describe his stance on the issue of reality, but at the same time it reflects the collective amnesia of the nation, and the politics of domination and tyranny. Interestingly, such concern is very forcefully addressed by the Pakistani poet Omar Tarin who, in his poem, “Gandhara, At The Taxila Museum” (in *The Anvil of Dreams* 1994), expresses the same issue with great force.

Gandhara, you are framed!
Glazed
And gazed at,
Your terra-cotta soul
Of ochre and bronze
Is locked and contained
By those who defaced
You of your character; (1-8)

The power of the images of the “incomplete statue of the fasting Buddha,” and “terra-cotta soul” of the Gandhara civilization leads us to acknowledge the unseen, which is

forgotten by the state. These images, thus, help to revise the buried past which is not acknowledged by the country. “The missing parts of the statue” become a symbol of the absence and distortion of the history of Gandhara civilization in Pakistan. The history text books in Pakistan reflect very well the general deceptions of “truth” paraded by the state: its nationalistic obsession with preserving the one which only helps promote the state sponsored narrative.⁷

The essay “Going Home,” from where the passage on the “fasting Buddha” is taken, is not directly concerned with the political situation in Pakistan. The reason to discuss the image of “the fasting Buddha” is to establish that, if a writer pays attention to the details and creates images, provocative and much more subversive subject matter automatically follows. This is Ghose’s inescapable, perhaps the most important, lesson for the reader.

To sum up, this section, I suggest that Ghose’s views on art and literature are based on three things. First, his views are indebted to the masters, the ones mentioned earlier, of European literature: the literary question comes before the political. Second, Ghose’s sense of history that the issue of exploitation is not new, and should not be seen in terms of East vs. West, colonial vs. colonized, so on and so forth. Third, the issue of reality should not be confined to the socio-political reality only.

⁷ On the state of history and historiography in Pakistan K. K. Aziz wrote numerous books. He paid the price for writing objective history: he was continuously bullied by the Pakistani state machinery; eventually he had to leave the country under General Zia’s ruthless regime. My view on teaching of history in Pakistan is based on Aziz’s *The Murder of History: A Critique of History Textbooks Used in Pakistan*. Lahore: Vanguard, 1993.

The Argument

This section deals with Ghose's literary obscurity and critical neglect. And, finally, I make my case for the evaluation of Ghose's work on the basis of his achievement as a writer.

In 1963 Ghose received a special award from the E. C. Gregory Trust that was judged by T. S. Eliot, Henry Moore, Herbert Read and Bonamy Dobrée⁸. A year earlier, in an issue devoted to the newly emerging Commonwealth literature, *The Times Literary Supplement* featured Ghose as a prominent poet from the former British colonies by conspicuously printing three of his poems spread across half a page⁹. By the time he was featured in *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* (1989), Ghose had been accorded major status as a writer of international repute. As the editors of *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* noted in their "Introduction," "Zulfikar Ghose has both ranked with and outranked several of the best English language writers in England and America." They went on to present him as "a unique figure in contemporary literature" whose "evolution across languages and national boundaries" was comparable to that of Conrad, Nabokov, and Beckett (108-9).

In spite of receiving such notable attention, Ghose has remained a marginal presence, and if I may use a word which sounds a little inappropriate, untouchable, in the critical practice among writers accorded a world-class status such as Salman Rushdie and V.S Naipaul. Of the several reasons advanced for Ghose's marginalization by scholars of

⁸ Note on dust jacket of *The Loss of India* by Zulfikar Ghose (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964).

⁹ *The Times Literary Supplement*: London, 10 August 1962.

world literature and post-colonial studies, the most significant one is that his oeuvre resists categories. Feroza Jussawalla and Reed Way Dasenbrock note that:

An expedition in search of Ghose's books in the library is an illuminating experience: for example, [in] the library of the ... University of Texas Austin, his books are to be found in four different places. Some of his earlier work with Asian settings and most of his poetry is to be found under South Asian Literature in English; his early collection of short stories written with B.S. Johnson ... is located in English literature; most of his recent work is found in American literature; but *The Incredible Brazilian* trilogy, seen perhaps as "adventure literature," is located in the PZ section reserved for adolescent literature and popular fiction. Each of these classifications—except for the last—is logical enough, we suppose, but the net result is that Ghose's work is dismembered and unavailable to readers as a whole. (109)

This passage clearly highlights Ghose's literary obscurity, and suggests difficulties in putting Ghose in a neat literary category.

Jussawalla and Dasenbrock, in the same introductory essay on him in *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, noted pointedly that Ghose has "displayed little or no interest in the dilemmas of immigration and transplantation that have so occupied other South Asian writers." Although several of his novels are set in South America, "his use of that locale is sufficiently his own to distinguish himself from the South American writers," that, unlike other South Asian writers, he is engaged in "experimental modes of fiction," that "Ghose's work, in short, is *sui generis*, and he is a unique figure in contemporary literature"(108-9).

Sarah Brouillette, an academic at MIT, points out another factor that explains Ghose's literary obscurity, that "the stronger argument for Ghose's marginal position must emphasize the tendency of the market to promote writers who are easily identified with a political identity related to a specific nationality, who can then be marketed in those terms to a typically Anglo-American audience for literary fiction" (101). This

“tendency of the market to promote writers” on the basis of political and national identity is successfully complemented by a certain, dominant strand of critical practice within the field of postcolonial studies.

Ghose’s obscurity and critical marginalization can also be explained from another aspect which M. Keith Booker anticipates in his book *Critical Essays on Salman Rushdie* (1999) expressing that the “ ‘Rushdie’s children’ model of [South Asian] literary history will overestimate Rushdie’s importance and obscure other important trends in Indian literature” (2). Of course, this model has overestimated Rushdie’s importance as a writer. And surely, it has obscured “other important trends,” such as counterrealism in South Asian Anglophone literature. Since Rushdie flaunts his Indian identity, he is given a great deal of importance by some popular literary critics of Indian origin in the West. It is also true, however, that the fatwa against Rushdie also played an important role in his prominence. Whereas, Ghose is not a mouthpiece of any culture or region, he is ignored.

But I must admit that ‘Rushdie’s children’ model is an interesting template to deal with many of the South Asian English language writers. There is no doubt that Rushdie has influenced many of them. But Ghose is not one of them. Thus, one cannot evaluate Ghose’s work in the light of the “Rushdie’s children model.” Highlighting the problems of this model, Booker states that “not only does it [Rushdie’s children model] lump together too many very different writers in a single category but it leaves out important English-language writers (such as Mulk Raj Anand, Manohar Malgonkar, and even R.K. Narayan) who simply will not fit in” (*Critical Essays* 2). Ghose, too, does not fit in. He cannot be placed under the rubric of ‘Rushdie’s children’ model, for, among other things,

Ghose created complex works such as the Brazilian trilogy long before Rushdie became prominent on the world literary scene.

According to Booker, Rushdie's remarkable reception by the critics has many reasons: he is a writer of genius; his work is complex, and addresses issues of cultural importance; his literary technique corresponds very well with the western critic. Rushdie's use of irony, parody, and carnivalesque imagery made him an ideal postmodern writer (*Critical Essays 2*). All these traits, among other things, determine Ghose's work as well. Ghose, too, is full of irony, parody and carnivalesque imagery. But what obscures Ghose is that he does not deal with the subject matter Rushdie does. For example, as mentioned above, Rushdie, among other things, is concerned with South Asian history and the political events that have defined, and continue to do so, the nature of the region. More importantly, Rushdie's rhetoric for India, and of Indianness, and his growing comfortability in the western capitalistic structures, earned him enviable popularity. Ghose, on the other hand, is not a commentator on postcolonial issues. Therefore, not being involved in the South Asian cultural politics and not fitting in the 'Rushdie's children' model, Ghose's marginalization in critical circles and South Asian literary historians is understandable.

There is only one book length study on Ghose's work so far. The study, *Structures of Negation: The Writings of Zulfikar Ghose*, by Kanaganayakam grew out of his doctoral dissertation that he completed in 1985 at the University of British Columbia. It is an admirable work, and I have acknowledged earlier that I have benefitted from this book. Broadly speaking, the book addresses the following fundamental questions:

Ghose's experimentation with form, his significance as a postcolonial writer, and that the issue of 'native-alien experience' underpins his corpus of writing.

On the question of form, my study agrees with Kanaganayakam's claim that reading Ghose through form is inevitable (8). But his experimentation with form is not to explore 'native-alien experience.' I think Ghose's experimentation with form suggests his conscious decision to emulate the important writers of the west: the likes of Shakespeare, Chekhov, Joyce, and Beckett. When Ghose moved away from his two early realistic novels, form remained his major concern. However, I do not study all the novels through form except the trilogy. In *A New History of Torments*, *Don Bueno*, and *Figures of Enchantment*, for instance, my focus remains on the ideal of objectivity in these works; whereas, Kanaganayakam reads these works as magical realist. My focus, on the whole, is to study the correspondence between style and content.

As to the issue of Ghose being a postcolonial writer, I do not agree with Kanaganayakam. In his study, he highlights Ghose's significance as a postcolonial writer (9). But as Fawzia Afzal-Khan in her review of *Structures* argues, "the term postcolonial is never rigorously examined" in Kanaganayakam's work (641). To Kanaganayakam's defense, given the nature of the field of postcolonialism, this nebulous entity is hard to define, and, perhaps, defend on the basis of hard historical facts. Afzal-Khan points out another problem of the study that Kanaganayakam finds himself in the same paradox that he "discovers in Ghose's position—that is, to show that he both is and is not "political"... that he both is and is not a "political" writer" (641). Again, any critic dealing with an English language writer from a former colony finds himself in a dilemma. As a matter of fact, to briefly point out, any evaluation of a so-called Third World literature is highly

problematic. To begin with, it is taken for granted, it seems, that the evaluation has to be political rather than aesthetic. The critical analysis has to deal with, one way or the other, the issues of nationalism and colonialism. In addition, broadly speaking, the metropolis critic is patronizing toward the English language literature from the former colonial outposts, ignoring the question of craft, which gives prominence to a certain type of writers. The local critic, on the other hand, finding the English language writings less nationalistic, is hostile and ethnocentric, chauvinistic and dismissive of these writings. Such a situation puts you in a paradox.

Therefore, in order to avoid dilemmas such as nationalistic pitfalls, I categorically maintain that my concern in this study is to discuss Ghose's experimentation with form, his subject matter, and to discuss how his style negotiates with his content.

Therefore, this study, among other things, investigates the structural patterns in the novels of Ghose that give each of his works its peculiar aesthetic design. I observe that in his work, though the style of his expression gives what is expressed its special resonance, his subject matter, nevertheless, is not without relevance to contemporary socio-political dynamics. Ghose's work, as already pointed out, challenges both the traditional and non-traditional structures of authority. Above all, to put it again, I highlight success as well as failure of Ghose's negotiation between his style and content.

Ghose's development as a writer from his preoccupation with realism to the artifacts of language and the irrelevance of physical and geographical belonging is a very distinctive aspect of his writing. Ghose's preoccupation with form is a conscious one, for he does not believe in formulaic writing. That is why he looks up to the gurus of English literature as opposed to aligning himself with any specific cultural, political, or identity

politics. He remains an artist who creates his art, and is not responsible to any political agenda of the postcolonial world. In this study, as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, I make my way between Ghose's solipsistic stance on art and aesthetics and the issues of exploitation, and the structures of authority that his work effectively reveals.

Finally, I am interested in Ghose's writing due to his unique voice, one that is not made paranoid by the so-called seriousness of the popular critics in postcolonial studies. In addition, I cannot think of any other writer from the postcolonial era who has defended the question of art so unflinchingly in the face of the onslaught of the politics of postcolonial studies, still highlighting very important issues of exploitation and domination in a very provocative way. Therefore, I acknowledge that this study, as pointed out earlier, is simultaneously a reading of his novels in a "good old fashioned way"—perhaps labeled as simplistic—in which a writer is appreciated for his work by exploring his achievement as an artist. Once again, I do not want to prove that he is a Pakistani, Indian, British or American writer because he showed no interest in nationalistic categories. He finds his home in art. Adorno mentions that "writing becomes a place to live," but [i]n the end, the writer is not even allowed to live in his writing" (in Said n. pag.).

In this regard, I respect the writer's views on the issue of pigeonholing. At a time when literary criticism, in general, has a little place for an author's point of view, I take into account Ghose's position on the issue of categorization of literature. Therefore, I do not want to put him in a category, and let him live in his work. In an answer to a question by Dasenbrock and Jussawalla he acknowledged, "Yes, Nabokov and Conrad would be my great companions in this. I aspire to their position in the world of letters where you

are accepted for what you have done and not because you have conformed and put yourself into a pigeonhole” (148). So, this study will not put him into a category, but evaluate him for what he has achieved in terms of form, style, and subject matter—his exposition of tyrannical structures of authority, exploitation, and religious and political domination.

On the whole, this study provides a foundational understanding of Ghose’s novels especially for South Asian students, and in Pakistan in particular, where Ghose's works have been included in university syllabi and courses. Thus, an effort is made to give him a close reading which could be helpful to understand his corpus of writing. With this background in mind, I have devised chapters of my study to have an overall picture of his novels.

Chapterization

The five chapters in this study deal with Ghose’s published novels only. Chapter one deals with the first two novels, *The Contradictions* and *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. These two novels belong to his early mimetic phase of writing. They reflect the socio-political concerns in colonial India, India and Pakistan. The mode he takes up is realistic. He tries to highlight the important concerns appertaining to the society in those times. Both *Contradictions* and *Aziz Khan* operate in the nineteenth-century realistic mode which shaped much of the postcolonial novel. *Contradictions* deals with petty bourgeois life in the British India, and *Aziz Khan* deals with the failure of the promise of post-independence Pakistan.

Kanaganayakam, however, argues that the subject matter of these novels is to meet the certain demands of realism or realistic fiction that need to be adhered to. In

other words, to justify the needs of the realistic form, the writer has to bring in socio-political subject matter. He records one of his personal conversations with Ghose. He says:

... his [Ghose] main focus was not British India in *The Contradictions*. Referring to *The Murder of Aziz Khan*, he says that the main intention was not to show how bad things were in Pakistan. The objective, which is not primarily sociological, is in a sense embodied in a narrative mode that is ideally suited for the portrayal of external reality. (38)

Despite Kanaganayakam's defense of obvious referentiality in the novel, it is concerned with the socio-political realities in the newly born Pakistan. Ghose himself states that the novel was his response to a newspaper report that he had read during his visit to Pakistan in the 1960s. The newspaper report was about a landlord who was forced to quit his land for the establishment of an industry.¹⁰

In *Aziz Khan*, the historical material is looked at thoughtfully, and the social milieu is treated very carefully. This novel is thus a greater achievement of the writer in his early career than *Contradictions*. Despite its limitations, the novel remains a major work of art; however, the historians of South Asian fiction in English did not pay much attention to this novel. Referentiality, as stated earlier, remains fundamental to this novel, which goes counter to the Ghose's overall ideas about art and fiction writing.

In Chapter two, instead of dealing with *Crump's Terms* which was written before the trilogy but published later on, I take up the trilogy: *The Incredible Brazilian*. For one, *Crump's Terms* shares more with his later novel, *Hulme's Investigations into the Bogart Script*. Second, the trilogy is in many ways a rewriting of his second novel, *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. The title of the novel is strikingly referential. It clearly states that it is about

¹⁰ Ghose, Zulfikar. Personal interview. 9 Aug. 2006.

Brazil. However, Ghose uses Brazilian history successfully to create an imaginative work that reminds us of works like *Don Quixote* and *Little Big Man*. I look into the historical material and the form of the trilogy to evaluate it properly. The trilogy comprises three big novels, and revolves around a central figure called Gregorio who undoubtedly reminds us of Don Quixote. Thus, here Ghose takes up a much older form known as the picaresque mode.

The trilogy, indeed, takes on the issues of the real world. I have focused on the trilogy through the picaresque form. The trilogy, as mentioned earlier, in terms of its subject matter, is a rewriting of Ghose's *The Murder of Aziz Khan* on a larger scale. It has a canvas, and uses Brazilian history successfully. But, at the same time, it remains an authorial imaginative construct. Ghose has proven that he can create a work where the subject matter is not without relevance, but also a text which is of great imagination. Thus the trilogy has the appeal both for its historical treatment and form.

Chapter three addresses *Crump's Terms* and *Hulme's Investigation into the Bogart Script*. *Crump's Terms* was Ghose's third novel, but it shares affinities with *Bogart Script*; therefore, these two novels are put together for analysis. The former is a stream of consciousness novel, and highlights the issue of ineffective communication in the post War European society in the 1960s. The latter is in a sense a very postmodern novel, in which Ghose experiments with the meta-fictional mode, and offers a critique of capitalist American society. Both these works are experimental, and draw attention to the writer's craft. In these novels, style and content successfully complement each other.

Ghose wrote *Crump's Terms* in 1968, just one year after the publication of *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. But it was only published in 1975. It is an unusual, experimental

novel, one that the publishers did not expect from a writer of the postcolonial world. In this chapter I analyze *Crump's Terms* and explore what makes it distinct from Ghose's earlier two novels. The setting of the novel moves from Pakistan to Europe, and the mode he adopts is one that we might call stream of consciousness. Ghose consciously picks up the form that marks the break with his earlier experimentation with the realistic mode.

Hulme's Investigations into the Bogart Script was written in the 1970s after the completion of the second part of the Brazilian trilogy, *The Beautiful Empire*, and before the third part, *A Different World*. But it was published in 1981. Like *Crump's Terms*, nobody was ready to publish it. *Hulme's Investigations*, is fundamentally a fictional construct. It also addresses the issues of modern individuals who struggle against an exploitative socio-economic system. The issue of exploitation is highlighted through commercialization of female body and unreal human relationships. To highlight these issues Ghose uses camera-eye narrative technique.

Chapter four takes up *A New History of Torments* (1982), *Don Bueno* (1983), and *Figures of Enchantment* (1986). In these novels, one does not fail to notice the verifiable settings which are evident from the names of the places and the people in these novels. This could, as some reviews have suggested, lead one to read these works as straight realistic novels. However, Ghose's own point of view helps to establish the fact that referentiality is not his primary concern. About these novels Ghose states:

Actually the setting has nothing whatsoever to do with anything. With these novels, I entered a phase of pure invention. There are images in them that come from direct observation ... But I am not concerned in them with common reality. I create the illusion of reality when in fact I have no reality at all, except that of the imagination. (qtd. in Kanaganayakam 138)

Ghose reiterates his stance on reality as mere imaginative construct. But, one still wants to know about the verifiable names of the places, Ghose asserts: “You could take *A New History of Torments* and change all the Spanish names to Indian names, substitute the Himalayas and the Ganges for the Andes and the Amazon, but the novel itself would not alter [in] the slightest” (in Kanaganayakam 138). If we do a close reading of the narrative strategy of these novels, this assertion is not necessarily untrue.

More important, these novels are characterized by the principle of objectivity, which is the main concern of this chapter. Despite some strong socio-political substance, these novels are truly objective narratives. This phase informs us of Ghose’s imaginative powers. Again, in these novels too, Ghose highlights reality very convincingly.

Therefore, more than the question of referentiality, it is important that these novels portray the sexual politics, and other dynamics of exploitation which range from physical domination to gender exploitation completely objectively.

Chapter five deals with *The Triple Mirror of the Self*. Published in 1992, the novel proves a turning point in Ghose’s literary career. It virtually closed doors for Ghose’s subsequent novels. It is a very interesting and complex work. What is distinctive about this novel is that it opposes the conventional norms of literature, and at the same time, thematically, is subversive of authority, tyranny, and capitalistic power structures including the academic establishment backed by capitalism. *The Triple Mirror* is an ambitious work in terms of setting, form, and style. The novel is set on four continents: South America, America, Europe, and the subcontinent of India. In its content and locale, form and style, the novel offers a blueprint of what Ghose has achieved in his oeuvre. The writer depicts a dreamlike world, complicated, and yet stunningly real, full of socio-

political violence. Ghose presents his subject matter through vivid imagery. The novel's dense, imaginative prose keeps us conscious of its language; whereas, mindless violence depicted in the novel makes it a politically aware text. As he has done in his previous works, Ghose's narrative strategy is just as significant as the subject matter.

In this chapter, I try to highlight a complex relationship of style and content in the novel, and to respond to the issue raised by Kanaganayakam regarding the novel's opposition to Ghose's views expressed in *Art*.

In the end, these five chapters are followed by a conclusion.

Chapter One

The Contradictions and The Murder of Aziz Khan

Building on socio-historical material, these two novels are written in the mode of eighteenth-and nineteenth-century realism. These two works explicitly reflect socio-political concerns in the subcontinent of India and Pakistan. *The Contradictions*¹¹ and *The Murder of Aziz Khan*,¹² therefore, are antithetical to Ghose's later views on art and fiction writing. Ghose, as we know, is opposed to formulaic writing and an unequivocal sociopolitical representation in a work of art. However, among other things, Kanaganayakam argues that British India is not the main focus in *Contradictions*. Likewise, the purpose of *Aziz Khan* is not to show the bad condition in Pakistan (38).

Ghose would also like us to believe that these novels are divorced from socio-historical context. This is not true. The purpose of these works, as I shall argue in this chapter, is sociological. The subject matter is not embodied in the narrative mode of realism. There are issues of style: especially the interruption of the narrative with high-sounding statements. Although *Contradictions* tries to sound anti-referential by bringing in the question of art and other counter-realistic episodes, it is not. *The Contradictions* highlights the petty life of the British ruling elite in colonial India. *Aziz Khan*, on the other hand, effectively reveals the problems of political, social, and economic exploitation in newly-born Pakistan. Due to its historical significance and relevance to contemporary Pakistan, *Aziz Khan* achieved greater critical reception than *Contradictions*. The former is undoubtedly the stronger novel of the two. A brief

¹¹ From this point on, I will refer to this book as *Contradictions*.

¹² From this point on, I will refer to this book as *Aziz Khan*.

comparison toward the end of this chapter suggests some aspects of style, and helps us understand that *Aziz Khan* is a greater novel than *Contradictions*.

The Contradictions

The Contradictions has two parts. Set in British India, the first part of the novel deals with Christopher, his wife Sylvia, and their reciprocity with the British ruling elite. Christopher is a British civil servant. Through retrospective details, we come to know that before marrying Sylvia, he was a widower, and has a young daughter, Olivia, who is living in England. Sylvia is described as a stubborn woman, and her family is worried that she will not find a husband. When she agrees to marry Christopher who is twenty years older than her, Sylvia's family feels relieved: The family avoids the embarrassment of her spinsterhood.

The novel sheds a light on the married life of Christopher and Sylvia. It also portrays the life of the British in the backdrop of Indian culture and society. We come across a series of petty, dramatic events of the British life there. During one of the social gatherings, Christopher is accused of sexual assault. Albeit Christopher is innocent, he is asked to resign. Therefore, Christopher and Sylvia have to leave for England.

In the second part of the novel, Christopher starts his business and becomes successful in it. Sylvia increasingly involves herself in abstract ideas. Her husband, on the other hand, deeply commits himself to his business and material advancement. Sylvia meets Mr Harding, a surrogate novelist. Her interaction with Harding and their conversation becomes an interesting part of the novel. Toward the end of the story, Christopher dies. Sylvia is concerned about Olivia's well-being; whereas, Harding seems more interested in Sylvia than Olivia.

The above brief account of the novel is necessary to contextualize my analysis of the novel. To begin with, *Contradictions* was the outcome of Ghose's response to the average novels that he had read as a reviewer for *The Western Daily Press* in the 1960s. Ghose was not happy with those novels, and thought that he should embark upon fiction writing (Kanaganayakam 36). But he could not do justice to his first novel because he had not yet formed his worldview about fiction, which was determined later on when he ended up admitting in his interviews and critical work that Marcel Proust and Samuel Beckett were his gurus.

So, understandably, the critical response to *The Contradictions* was unflattering. In his review, Stephen Wall stated, "The lugubrious narrative tone of Zulfikar Ghose's first novel is not helped by his constant mulling-over of abstractions" (27). We shall see later in the discussion of the novel, the real problem is its abstract talk. Ghose did not like it either. In response to my question about the creation of the novel, Ghose stated that "I wrote it so long ago that I've forgotten what's in it. All I can say is that I had written very little fiction until that time. I had not yet read James Joyce, Beckett, Woolf, Flaubert, Proust—all the really important modern writers."¹³ Ghose seems dismissive of his first novel, and acknowledges that he had not been exposed to great English language writers such as Joyce, Beckett, and Woolf. At this time, his exposure to George Eliot, Hardy, Huxley, and Forster shaped his early literary career. This is evident from *Contradictions*; it is similar to Forster's *A Passage to India*. What Wall says, as mentioned above, about "abstractions" and "lugubrious narrative tone" in *Contradictions* is equally true of *Passage*. But, unlike *Passage*, *Contradictions* did not attract the attention of both the

¹³ Ghose, Zulfikar. Message to the author. 4 December 2010. E-mail.

readers and the critics. *Passage*, as we know, enjoys a tremendous popularity, an enviable reputation, in South Asian English language literary circles. It is a part of syllabi and courses in English departments in the sub-continent. *Contradictions*, on the contrary, is virtually unknown to the English Departments in the sub-continent. This has to do with Ghose's conscious disavowal of the nationalistic associations with either of the countries in the region; whereas *Passage* became popular because it was written by a British man about India, and that too in a sympathetic tone.

The Contradictions has the structure of a typical realistic novel of the nineteenth century. As suggested earlier, *The Contradictions* depicts the superfluous life of the British in India. Christopher and Sylvia are living an unhappy married life, while the structures of exploitation in the form of the colonial bureaucratic machinery continually marginalize him. Sylvia, on the other hand, is portrayed as domesticated, tamed, and harnessed. She is completely away from the materialistic side of life; it is this aspect which keeps the reader's attention. Her reverie and idealistic concerns become the main attention of the novel. Her idealistic concerns are in fact a struggle against the authority imposed by the norms of the society.

Sylvia is important because through her character we can understand strengths and weaknesses of this novel. To begin with, Sylvia reminds us of Mrs. Moore in *Passage to India*. Like Mrs. Moore she wants to understand India. Sylvia's response to India is not that of an outsider, but she has complete empathy for the land. She says: "I would seek out the most barren parts of the country. I would command not people, but the earth. I would present the gift of creativeness to dry land by raising my hand" (16). She is enchanted by the Indian landscape, but she does not fully comprehend the Indian

way of life. For example, the servant Karim's wife, gives birth to a child. The depiction is thought provoking:

An elderly woman, who was probably her or Karim's mother, was stooping over a bowl of water, the newborn child in her hands, gently going about her business with no more fuss than she would have given a piece of embroidery. 'Is your wife all right?' Sylvia asked Karim. 'Yes, yes,' he replied, showing his white teeth. 'And the child?' 'Yes, yes. Mother know what to do. A baby nothing for her. It happen every day. (72)

She is stuck between the harmonies and contradictions of Indian life. Quite expectedly she is shocked and dismayed over the handling of a woman giving birth to a child. Sylvia is a stock bourgeois character who is portrayed as sympathetic to the natives. She is presented as thoughtful, sounds intellectual, but a close analysis shows that she is full of clichés. Her talk is full of abstractions. Her desire to make important statements is reflected in almost every single situation she is depicted in. "Perhaps it's we who fail life and not life us,..." (30). Is the purpose of her statement to give the reader an education? We do not know, but this and many other abstractions are in fact interruptions in the flow of the story. In addition, her abstract talk does not challenge the structures of authority and domination. The more she sounds intellectual, the more she seems to be reinforcing the same authority.

Consequently, in spite of Sylvia's extreme dissatisfaction with her husband, she does not leave him. Sylvia's talk hardly evades the undertones of sexual dissatisfaction. Still, she willingly submits herself to marriage to Christopher, who is much older than she, and unable to perform sexually. Walking down the street in Connaught Place in Delhi, she is looking for coarse silk. When the shopkeeper provides her with the soft silk, Sylvia says, no, "Something coarse. Not for a dress" (34). It is a telling remark, and

reveals about her unpleasing sex life. She does not liberate herself; rather, she confines herself in a male dominated setup. Similarly, when she has grown tired of the viceroys party, and the Wickhams, on her way back, she finds two Indian peasants in the dark making love violently. The narrator tells us:

... she observed the earthly brutality of sex almost with a thrill. She retraced her steps when the lovers lay still, and began in the increasing darkness to find her way home, wondering with a slight inward smile if Christopher would have the strength later in the evening to use her with the same violence with which she had just seen the young Indian drive the poor girl into the earth. (47-48)

The words like “force,” “violence,” and “strength” reveal Sylvia’s extreme desire to be mastered by Christopher. However, from a stylistic point of view, this description does not add anything to the novel except Sylvia’s increasingly unhappy sex life. With Sylvia keenly watching the couple, the depiction of the Indian couple making love in the darkness would have been sufficient to convey her desire. But the writer does not trust the reader, and therefore he does not reveal the information through the creation of an image but through an explanation. Thus, an elaborate explanation of Sylvia’s sexual desires is a needless interruption in the flow of the story.

The pattern of the images in Ghose’s later work warns the reader about the developments in the story; but in this novel the images do not correspond with the depiction of the situation. This reflects the problems of the style of the novel. The description of the beauty of the landscape, for example, is not in line with the inner anxieties of Sylvia. She realizes the beauty of colors, the composition of rocks, but interestingly all this further highlights her misery, and more importantly her failing love. Moreover, even when the writer creates beautiful images, the interruption of the narrator along with detailed explanations impairs the craft and the delightfulness of the story.

Christopher's unsuccessful attempt to perform the sexual act in a hotel room in Mumbai is a case in point. Sylvia, we are told, "looked at the sea which was coming in, stealthily nibbling its way towards her. She wanted to convince herself that it was not only unimportant but also irrelevant, but the sea kept coming in and she, far from being submissive as sand, felt like an isolated rock which the waters must inevitably surround and yet leave dry at the core" (86). Despite Sylvia's attempt to rationalize that sexual pleasure in a married life is not important, she fails. This idea is forcefully revealed through the beautiful images of "sea," "sand," and "isolated rock." But the writer ruins these images when he gives an unnecessary explanation about "The pure lust in her body [that] had asserted itself and she regretted its dissipation into inactivity because of Christopher's failure" (86).

In a way what is going on in Sylvia's mind becomes a central concern of the narrator. The narrator explains every situation. It appears that the narrator is trying to help out the reader because of the assumption that Sylvia is a complex character. After seeing an Indian woman in utter misery, the narrator informs us about Sylvia's thoughts:

Oh reality! Was this it, she wondered, a confrontation with the despicable, the inhuman, the wretched, which left one wordless? What an absurd word *reality* was: the rich, it was said, did not face reality if they ignored to acknowledge the existence of poverty or if they turned their nose away from it; political parties accused each other of being unrealistic; novelists were judged by the quality of realism they portrayed; and poets were said to escape from reality when their entire concern was to expose its true character. How could there be a reality, she wondered, when each one of us essentially lived in his own mind and there was no certainty that what was contained there was also discoverable in other forms in other minds and had a common source? (36)

This narration of Sylvia's thoughts interrupts the continuous action of the narrative. In addition, thematically, despite her sympathetic tone, she slips into a typical bourgeois

attitude, and retreats into her individualism by consoling her troubled mind through her assertion that poverty is nothing more than “a common everyday occurrence, which was of little significance; the poverty and deprivation suffered by millions of creatures on this earth was nothing new and while it was laudable for one to be moved by it and to want to lessen it, it was not relevant to her mind’s debate” (36). Again from the perspective of style, one wonders about the significance of this description other than to display the humanity in Sylvia. However, the question of reality in this passage is very interesting in how it is explored by the narrator.

The issue of Sylvia’s troubled thoughts is revealed further in an effort to console her mind through a discussion on the question of language and reality. Broadly speaking, it reveals the alienation of a person, in this case an elite woman. She debates this issue with Christopher. “A *rational* language? She cried. I don’t know a rational language when all the important words in it are abstract ones which one can privately interpret for oneself. Life, death, birth, love, existence. Can common sense alone ever tell us what *they* mean?” (69). Thus, we see that Sylvia’s quest or struggle for a satisfying conception of an ideal persists, further revealing her alienated condition. What apparently looks like a quest for a satisfying ideal vision is in fact a direct result of her unpleasant marriage. For about three pages in the first section of the second part of the novel, the writer discusses the question of reality to tell the reader that Sylvia is reading, *Aesthetics, Language and Existence* (109-12). This is not a real book. The book is the writer’s invention, and is full of “verbiage.”¹⁴ At the surface level, it represents Sylvia’s profundity. But it is in another example of poor style. Ghose is concerned with telling but not showing the story. The

¹⁴ Ghose, Zulfikar. Message to the author. 28 May 2011. E-mail.

information is not revealed through continuous action in the story. Therefore, the artistic merit reduces to mere narration of events.

However, Sylvia's character highlights some interesting subject matter. She does not find neat answers to the question of existence and a meaningful idea of reality. For her, the quest remains central, and it helps to be able to start over again. She reveals the predicament of a bourgeois woman: her dissatisfaction, and alienation. This is a great subject matter. Sylvia as a character, however, does not help elevate the aesthetics of the novel. There is too much "I" in Sylvia. And there is too little camera "eye" to show the events in all the meticulous detail. This reduces the novel to the empty and abstract talk of its characters.

The empty and abstract talk is not solely the domain of Sylvia, but it is reflected in Christopher's character too. He also tries to make important statements that add little to the actual novel. Christopher says of the landscape that:

I find it attractive because there is an honesty about it. It's earth and sky mutually interlocked, indifferent to the needs of man. Which is what all of man's environment really is, indifferent and uncaring, though life mercifully is not always a tedious train journey. There are no compromises here, no fruit trees to suggest that perhaps nature does care for man, there are no illusions here about the importance of life. (74)

Both Sylvia and Christopher are enchanted by the landscape; however, in the case of Sylvia, her misery is fore-grounded against the beauty of the landscape. In the case of Christopher, it looks completely like empty talk. But it is important to understand that the obsession with landscape for both Sylvia and Christopher is in fact colonial desire of mastery over foreign shores, which is masquerading in their exotic description of these landscapes.

This contradiction of Sylvia's abstract talk and Christopher's simple statements highlight yet another aspect of contradictions in the novel. Christopher makes some interesting observations about India which are not necessarily untrue. He states that:

Business opportunity has always been a prime motive in territorial expansion. But for many of us India is an Idea. It has been an idea for centuries. People were always wanting to sail to India. It was somehow the farthest of journeys which one could attempt. The earliest adventurers got business houses or emperors to finance them on the pretext of subsequent commercial advantage, but really that was only an excuse. (81)

This is a typical rationalization of colonialism. This echoes a comment in Pynchon's *V*: "India for some gorgeous notion of Empire" (162). Christopher starts off with a right assumption that the reason of expansion has always been economic benefits, but he makes an exception in the case of India by saying that it was because of the adventure they wanted to have and that is why they had captured India. Of course, it is simplistic but a commonplace notion among the colonizers. The notion that India is an idea only is further revealed in Mr Hodgson's, another character in the novel, comment that "There is no India, Mr Hodgson said. 'We have a mass of land on atlases which we call India, but no more. There are no Indians, only groups of people and not from one race only'" (96). This might sound problematic, but Hodgson's view about India is not untrue. Indian nationalism or Indian identity, as we know it today, gradually emerged long after the British occupation of it in the nineteenth century. There could be many reasons of the absence of Indian nationalism in the nineteenth century. Although it is offensive to some, but the most convincing among these reasons is advanced by Aijaz Ahmad who states that "India had a long history of invaders who created empires which were eventually considered legitimate" (*Ghazals* xii).

What makes the novel interesting, however, is that it tries to reject its realistic concerns. This is evident from the introduction of the character, Mr Harding, a surrogate novelist. It is clear that Harding speaks for Ghose's philosophy about writing and how the writing should be. "But there's no such thing as realism, Mr Harding said. 'All knowledge is metaphorical, and it follows that all experience must also be metaphorical'" (141). Harding's character does not add much to the novel. His ideas on art are empty slogans. Here it is worth mentioning that back in the 1960s, any interpretation of the novel could have easily avoided Mr Harding's character. But today, at a time when we are aware of Ghose's radical critical stance in favor of form as opposed to some socio-political preoccupation of a work, Harding's character stands out.

Harding's novelistic aspirations are representative of Ghose's own ideas about art. Harding's views about the art of fiction writing are reflected in a conversation with Sylvia and Christopher that is worth quoting. Harding states, "I could write a novel about India, meticulously and cruelly depicting its poverty; or bringing out the injustices of the British rule; or the silly superfluity which is the life of the British society there. I'm sure such a novel would be a great success" (142). It is true that here Ghose is not writing about the utter poverty of British India. However, he does represent the superfluity of the British ruling elite there. Yet, contrary to Harding's view that the depiction of "the silly superfluity" of the British could earn a novel great success, *Contradictions* could not become successful. What is ironic here is that the educated Indian public happily reads about the petty activities of the colonial bourgeoisie in an exotic setting. *A Passage to India*, among other things, is a testimony to this.

Harding also brings up the issue of labeling and categories because of the subject matter of a novel. Harding's critique of the critical practices of the 60s serves as a reminder that Ghose's own thought on such contrived socio-political consciousness was already apparent in his first novel. So, it helps demonstrate that Ghose's complaint against critics is not new or a reaction to the neglect of his writings. Harding adds that "If I wrote about poverty, people would call me Dickensian. Or they would compare me to Jane Austen if I turned out soft ironies about the British society there. But listen, I'm not Dickens or Austen or anybody. I'm Harding and we are in the middle of the twentieth century" (142). I am empathetic with Harding's impatience with easy categorization of literature on the basis of subject matter. Harding's tone becomes harshest when he further elaborates on the issue of category, finding it to be an insult to be placed into a category. He challenges this assumption by stoking the embers of the politically unconscious apathy of the general reader to admit that, even if we read about reality, we do nothing. If the only purpose of a novel is to show reality then a newspaper article or a picture about a social reality can do it better. Therefore, he asks for an imaginative construct from a novelist (142-3).

Harding's "I" is important because it highlights a few specific points. First, it represents the views of Ghose's conception about art; second, it defeats the assumption that Ghose's views on the question of art in his later career is a shifting paradigm; third, and perhaps most important, Ghose, while writing this novel, realized that he was not doing a proper job with the art of writing, and therefore he introduced this character who speaks for him. Lastly, although Harding's claim in these lines shapes the rest of Ghose's creative work, it does not apply to the novel *Contradictions*. Kanaganayakam states that

“Ghose does not wish to be imitative, and he does not want to concern himself entirely with British India, but the narrative mode demands that the novel be written and read in a manner that recognizes the significance of historical reality” (39). Despite Kanaganayakam’s assertion about the necessities of the mode, one can say that Ghose is not successful in trying not to be imitative. Harding’s character reveals Ghose’s desire for mastery over art.

It is not only Harding who displays a strong opinion on the purpose of art in the novel. Olivia, Christopher’s daughter, is another character who gets attention for her views on art. Like Harding, she appears toward the end of the story, and still catches the attention of the reader. Olivia’s views on art are revealed through her discussion with Sylvia. Sylvia asks her about the truthful tendencies in novels. Olivia replies, “Well they are, aren’t they? Olivia said. ‘I mean they are nice stories to read but the writer always has a point to make, hasn’t he? I mean why doesn’t he simply make the point like a poet does, simply and briefly, instead of writing a long story” (124-5)? This is a legitimate concern that, if one wants to make a point, the novel is not a necessary tool for registering a point of view.

All this high-sounding talk of Harding, Sylvia, Christopher, and Hodgson creates an impression that the author is concerned with the complex working of their minds. Kanaganayakam, therefore, argues that what becomes more central is the craft, and the portrayal of the images, and the complex working of the mind of Sylvia than the British life in India (48). This is not true. Through these characters, the petty life of the British bourgeoisie is revealed. However, it is true that the author makes an attempt to render the novel less referential. But the writer is not completely successful in this attempt. We

cannot say that Ghose is trying to create a counter-realistic pattern or structure. Although he does try to foreground the craft and internal structure in order to show that artifice and reality can coexist. We know that Ghose is working in the realistic mode which asks for the portrayal of socio-political conditions. The effort on the part of Ghose to introduce a great deal of anti-referential moments, as we have seen in the case of Sylvia's portrayal in particular, in fact becomes too abrupt for the reader, and distracting as well. The movement from the public to the private and vice versa is a problem for the reader. Likewise, the artistic speculations and the metaphysical questions sound distracting rather than adding to the beauty of the internal structure of the novel. Nonetheless, if most consider Forster's *A Passage to India* a brilliant work of art, *Contradictions* is a reasonably good work. But from Ghose's own critical framework about art, *Contradictions* is a lesser work.

The Murder of Aziz Khan

As already suggested, Ghose was not happy with his first novel. So, he decided to write "a solid straightforward novel,"¹⁵ *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. The novel received a much better response; and people continue to read it to this day. This novel is particularly popular in Pakistan, where many consider it the most authentic depiction of the newly emerging elite in the country.¹⁶ Since the situation in Pakistan has not changed much, the novel therefore is relevant even more today.

Set in Pakistan, the novel deals with Aziz Khan's, the main character, struggle against the Shah brothers, the industrialists. Aziz Khan possesses seventy acres of land in

¹⁵ Ghose, Zulfikar. Personal interview. 5 November 2009.

¹⁶ Tariq Rahman has also talked about this in his essay, "Zulfikar Ghose and the Land of His Birth." *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* 9.2 (1989): 179-187.

Kalapur, which is far less than the Shah brothers who have bought thousands of acres to build their industrial empire (14). With the help of his sons, Rafiq and Javed, and his workers, Aziz Khan farms his land to earn livelihood for his family.

The Shah brothers, Akram, Ayub, and Afaq, have already bought the land adjacent to Aziz Khan's to build their cotton industry. They also want to buy Aziz Khan's land, but he refuses to sell his land. Ayub, having been a gangster in Mumbai before the partition, finds Aziz Khan's refusal insulting, and sets to destroy him. He finds this opportunity when his younger brother, Afaq, rapes a teenage peasant girl near Aziz Khan's land and kills her. The Shah brothers bribe the police. Typically, the police register a case against Rafiq and arrest him. Rafiq is hanged on the charge that he has never committed.

Afaq escapes to London. Razia, Ayub's wife, is deeply infatuated with Afaq. She follows him there. Upon discovering that Afaq has a girlfriend, Pamela, Razia leaves him. Back home she complains to her husband that Afaq has sexually assaulted her. Ayub is enraged and disowns him, and captures all the property, for Akram is sterile, due to a venereal disease, and has no children.

In the meantime, Aziz Khan's wife falls ill, and he borrows two thousand rupees for her treatment. He acquires this loan on the guarantee that if he fails to return the money, he will give Javed's dowry, and failing that, his land. Javed is murdered by assassins, Aziz Khan's wife dies. He cannot pay the money back. The Shah brothers capture the land. The novel ends with Aziz Khan walking around the fence which now encircles his land.

The above account reflects an overwhelming sociological content of the novel. *The Murder of Aziz Khan* like *The Contradictions* shares the plot structure of a typical realistic novel of the nineteenth century. The novel mocks the domination and exploitation of the poor at the hands of the emerging capitalism in Pakistan. *Aziz Khan* deals with the peasant life and its destruction in the face of the newly emerging capitalism in the newly-born country. The feudal order disintegrates, and is replaced by industrial exploitation. The Shah brothers gradually destroy Aziz Khan and his family.

Claire Tomalin, one of the reviewers of the novel, says that it is “curious to see the ills of ex-empire so devastatingly pinned down in the best manner of an English nineteenth-century novel” (n. pag.). By “ills of ex-empire,” she means the depiction of political and economic exploitation in the novel. However, these ills are not particular to the empire. In fact, the novel is about the exploitation of the locals at the hands of the local elite. But she is right that the novel is written in the realistic mode of the nineteenth-century fiction. Tariq Rahman, a Pakistani literary critic turned linguist, writes in *A History of Pakistani Literature in English* (1991) that the novel is “the only important work of fiction representing the social reality of the emergence of primitive capitalism in Pakistan in the nineteen sixties” (102). With the imposition of martial law by the self-proclaimed Field Marshal Muhammad Ayub Khan in 1958, the bourgeoisie started rising in Pakistan. Rahman posits:

Muhammad Ayub Khan, the general turned dictator, had created a transient phase of political stability in which military and other elites became affluent and consumerism could flourish. Taking advantage of this change in the psyche of the middle class, a number of industrialists started producing goods for local consumption. The textile industry was among the first to come up. The rural areas of Lyallpur (now Faisalabad) and the area between Lahore and Multan passed into the hands of industrialists. About these industrial changes—it can hardly be called a revolution—

there is no work of imagination either in Urdu or English which can compare in quality with *Aziz Khan*. (184)

This passage provides an overview of the socio-political developments in Pakistan, and establishes *Aziz Khan* as a representative work of literature of the time.

The exploitation of the Shah brothers is very interesting. The troika of the Shah brothers operate very effectively. In a sense they become a metaphor for Pakistan's exploitative socio-political system. The eldest, Akram, tricks people by giving them money to establish the industry; Ayub, the second one, keeps a check on the worker's union; and Afaq, the youngest of all, exploits women. So, these characters speak to the ways in which the industrial elite brings havoc through trickery, exploiting workers and women. The Shah brothers are representative of the famous troika of the Pakistani system—Mullah-Military alliance, Civil Bureaucracy, and Politicians. Robert Ross's evaluation is thought provoking:

... the three Shah brothers and their families represent the new Pakistan: the men arrogant, greedy, dishonest, conniving violent, blasphemous; the women silly, grasping, frustrated, bored. They violate the sanctity of the land by first literally destroying its ancient contours, then symbolically severing the subtle relationship between it and themselves. (200)

Indeed, among other things, the novel throws light on the rampant corruption in Pakistan. The mindless superficiality of the women in the novel is worth mentioning because it is not only typical to the upper class women in the country but also suggests some aspect of style of the novel.

Faridah, the wife of Akram, for example, is a testimony to this. Her taste and character represent those of typical Pakistani elite women—the love for ostentatious clothes and jewelry:

“Was there any pink?” Faridah asked.

“Pink?” Mr Feroze Khan asked. “*Begum Sahiba* I have each and every culler for your sootability, pink, saalmun red, turkwise, emmaruld green, purple, midnight blue, dark grey, baje, pee green, the cumpleet range, *begum sahiba*, the cumpleet range.”

Fiaz and Nasseim came hurrying back with rolls of material. (104)

From the point of view of style, Ghose’s deviation from the conventional spellings (vas and cumpleet are a case in point) is effective. It represents different modes of speech, and is an effective technique for a realistic work. “This may be a successful method of creating what Taufiq Rafat [the late Pakistani poet] calls the ‘Pakistani idiom’ (Rahman, *Pakistani Literature* 106). However, Ghose, in his later career, turned towards creation of imagery rather than creating a specific idiom.

The whole scene does not reflect the respect of a woman in Pakistani culture but servile flattery of a bourgeois person. While this goes on, i.e. Faridah shops, the narrator interrupts and gives an unexpected description of Bakshi, whom we later find to be a harmless idiot. But this interruption is not about grand statements about culture or society. Rather it is another image which complements the theme of exploitation in the novel. The narrator says:

A little way down the street, outside a grocery, a small, dwarf-like man was being thrown about and kicked by a crowd which seemed highly entertained by the exercise. Punjabi obscenities accompanied each blow. Faridah did not care to look; nor hear. She decided she liked the colour and returned to the shop, paying no attention to the sufferings of the dwarf called Bakshi. (104)

This passage is effectively foregrounded against Faridah’s shopping and reveals the insensitivity of the bourgeois woman on the one hand and the sadism and callousness of the society on the other—total degeneration and chaos.

The Shah brothers, being the representatives of the moneyed class, do everything to satisfy their false egos; they do nothing for the good of the community. They are the

product of a system which is characterized by extreme exploitation of the poor.

Unfortunately, the Shahs are the people who would shape the values of the emerging Pakistani society. The writer says: “Akram in the eyes of these people, who admired his ruthless methods, was not only a Pakistani enjoying his freedom; he was *the* Pakistani in whose type the successful citizens of the country would need to be moulded” (23). This seems that the writer is satirizing ordinary people who look up to an exploitative agency, namely, Akram. However, this is an honest judgment about the country, where all promises are defeated, and one finds no way of success except through exploitation and corruption. Ironically, it reveals the complete disillusionment of the people with the existing system.

Unlike the modern capitalistic structures which tend to be profit oriented only, the Shah brothers’ psyche is tinged with the feudal mindset—the lust for the possession and the overt subjugation of others. Ayub expresses to Akram that it is not that they want Aziz Khan’s land but they want to humiliate him: “At first we had economic reasons for wanting his land. And then, gradually, we realized that we were fighting against the pride of one man. And our own pride, our own honor were in question” (283). So, contrary to the modern day capitalism, which is subtle in its exploitation, the Shah brothers’ capitalism is typical to Pakistan—a mixture of feudal mindset and capitalistic want of wealth. The shah brothers’ lust for the acquisition of land explains a dilemma in Pakistani society where prestige is associated with not only money but also the land one owns. Therefore, a combination of feudalism and illegal ways of making money unites the military, the corrupt politicians, and businessmen. Talking about this combination, Tariq Ali states that “the bond that unites them [military leaders, corrupt politicians, and

businessmen] is money and the primitive accumulation of property in town and country” (5).

The novel takes on the destructive idea of the capitalistic individualism versus cooperation among human beings. The novel effectively portrays the estrangement of the Shah brothers due to their egotistical lust for power and wealth. This kind of capitalistic individualism leads to the split in the Shah family into three nuclear families. Aziz Khan’s family was split up by the Shahs’; it was destroyed by them, leaving him alone. Aziz Khan has an agrarian family system shaped by “the vegetative hopefulness of belief in a fixed order, almost a fatalism which approved only of the sort of routine repetition of which the sun’s daily rising and setting were the archetype” (53). The Shah brothers were, however, first uprooted from India, moved to Pakistan and then became an exploitative class. But, the new capitalistic structure in a newly-born country estranged the exploiters and deracinated the exploited. Both victims and the victimizers suffer, the former physically, the latter psychologically; so, the damage is across the board.

The independence of the country, for the Shah brothers, meant accumulating wealth at any cost. When the exploitation of the local bourgeoisie reached its peak, hopelessness and pessimism prevailed across the masses.

After the euphoria of independence, which is defined ironically in *Aziz Khan* as the freedom to pursue wealth at any cost, a second stage starts to evolve: the common people rebel, disillusioned by broken promises that mock independence and angry over the brutality and greed afflicting the businessmen and the rulers they rule....The laborers in the Shah brothers’ factory listen to just that person, Riaz, who ‘had spent his time in reading such diverse political economists as John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx’ Following the usual course of events, this incipient movement is soon crushed, its leaders destroyed. (Ross 201)

This is an accurate interpretation of the post-independence Pakistan. The promises of a better life were broken, and people became disillusioned. The factory workers, as the novel suggests, turned their ears to the workers' leader, Riaz, who spoke of Marxism as their only hope.

Unfortunately, young comrades/socialist leaders were killed during the Martial law regime of the 1960s. Shortly after Independence in 1947 the socialists were bullied and effectively checked, especially after their unsuccessful attempt to take over the government in 1950. The attempt was allegedly led by the famous Lenin peace prize winning poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz, and General Akbar Khan. Ali recalls the incident as follows:

In 1950, a small group of more nationalist minded officers (including a general, Akbar Khan), together with an even tinier collection of Communist intellectuals, discussed a possible coup d'etat to topple the pro-West government. The half-baked plot was uncovered, and the participants (including the poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz and the literary critics Sibte Hassan and Sajjad Zaheer) were sent to prison, and the infinitesimal Pakistan Communist Party was banned. (52)

Indeed, the whole episode provided a justification to the government to deal with the Communists and progressive intellectuals and students with an iron hand. Some of them were killed in custody. Not surprisingly, the incident has no legacy except some remarkable poetry by Faiz that he wrote during this time while being in prison.

Pakistan has not changed much. Corruption and exploitation have thrived more than ever. The workers and laborers are badly crushed; the trade unions were banned during successive martial laws. That is why this novel has an appeal for the contemporary Pakistani society too. The novel tells of how the ego of a traditional farmer was invaded and crushed by the newly emerging bourgeoisie. Capitalism, through its fostering of

excessive and mad lust for wealth and power, uproots everyone. This remains the major concern of the novel. Despite Ghose's claim of anti-referentiality and disinterestedness in subject matter of a political nature, he studies this theme in *Aziz Khan*. The two seemingly unusual positions of the significance of art and a perception of historical forces co-exist and complement in his writings. But in *The Murder of Aziz Khan*, the concern with socio-historical material is overt and blatant.

The novel's highest concern remains the exploitation of the poor. Kanaganayakam notes, "we see the changing economy, the emergence of the new classes, the ideological struggles between the industrialists and the workers, the corruption of the bureaucracy, the collapse of the traditional values, and the failure of religion" (41). Above all, the novel captures through the words of Javed (son of Aziz Khan), an important reality: "that the world had a way of deceiving itself" (215). In this case, evil takes the form of Capitalism. Certainly, Ghose's work is preoccupied with this theme, even though he may claim otherwise.

Like the economic exploitation, sexual exploitation is yet another motif that Ghose explores in *Aziz Khan*. Sexual imagery in the novel highlights the morality of the characters. Afaq is a rapist; Faridah remains "a virgin at forty three" (218-19), despite the fact that she has been married for so long. Akram, Faridah's husband, is suffering with a disease that makes him incapable of performing the act of sex. Ayub's sexual activity is "always abrupt and sometimes brutal" (100). Zarina, Akram's illegitimate daughter, resorts to fantasy to give vent to her sexual frustration. The sexual imagery in this novel reflects the frustrations and perversions in a bourgeois household. All these episodes lead into a chaos.

What is more interesting about the novel is that it completely evades any discussion of colonialism. The novel is not a critique of colonialism; rather, it is concerned with the local politics, and criticizes the exploitation of the local people by the local elite: to be precise, a narrative of the failure of the post-independence promise. This assertion is reflected in the foreword to the 1998 Oxford UP edition of the novel. It is interesting how Ghose views the novel some three decades later. He states in the foreword that:

One consequence (which has been observed universally) of freedom from foreign tyranny is that native adventurers and opportunists instantly leap into the space vacated by the foreign exploiters to aggrandize themselves at the expense of the people; and this seemed conspicuously prevalent in Pakistan. To make things worse, a military dictatorship had established itself in the land. The individual was thus doubly threatened—by the predatory practices of the new industrialists and by the loss of personal liberty. (n. pag.)

This passage reinforces the fact that the novel offers a critique on the exploitation of the ordinary people at the hands of the local elite. Again, it is evident that despite Ghose's distancing from the recording of historical facts, he has an intimate understanding of the problems of the newly-born country.

There is no conflict about socio-political dilemmas in *Aziz Khan*. The novel is completely concerned with the socio-political realities in the newly-born state of Pakistan. Ross narrates, "Its action taut, characters clearly defined, setting resplendent, this early novel moves gracefully toward its predetermined denouement: the death of its central character and the disruption of order, both the clear result of moral corruption" (202)¹⁷. Ghose himself states that the novel was the response to a newspaper report that

¹⁷ It seems that by "death of its central character," Ross means the death of Aziz Khan. But we need to clarify that Aziz Khan, the main character, does not die.

he had read during his visit to Pakistan while he was there to cover the cricket match. The newspaper report was about a small landowner who was forced to quit his land for the establishment of an industry.¹⁸

Here it is worth mentioning that the realism of English literature remains dominant in the literature of the postcolonial era. Ghose's *Contradictions* and *Aziz Khan* are no exception. Ross's observation provides some insight. "From a stylistic standpoint, the fictional accounts of post-colonialism have generally adhered to the dictates of realistic Western narratives forms, even as they embrace the mythic structure of their own culture"(201). Does this mean that the subject matter of these novels is because of their narrative technique? Or in other words, there are certain demands of realism or realistic fiction that need to be adhered to. This is not the case in *Aziz Khan*. Ghose, as we have seen, is concerned with real socio-political issues in Pakistan.

In his letter to Thomas Berger on 26 October 1968, one year after the publication of the novel, Ghose writes:

I heard from my Pakistani sources that the theme of *Aziz Khan* has recently been enacted there. The owner of a cement factory is the Aziz in this case and the man who played Ayub Shah is none other than the son-in-law of the president of the country: the Shah character, seeing that Aziz was doing well with cement and that the factory was in his neighborhood, demanded a 51% share of the business for no other reason than that Shah had power and that he suffered the factory smoke which blew towards his house. Aziz of course refused. A man was murdered, and Aziz has been charged with the murder though apparently he's quite innocent; but no lawyer in Pakistan will defend him for fear of the power of the president's family. (*The Review of Contemporary Fiction* 159)

Ghose states that the reality of his novel is enacted there in Pakistan. But it clearly suggests the author's consciousness about the socio-political situation in Pakistan.

¹⁸ Ghose, Zulfikar. Personal interview. 9 Aug. 2006.

Perhaps the most important evidence, and thereby the stylistic flaw, of the writer's concern about the sociological conditions in Pakistan comes from the statements that are made by interrupting the flow of the narrative. A case in point is when Rafiq and Javed talk about sexual matters. There is nothing wrong in showing two brothers talking about sexual matters. But, while the depiction of their sexual talk goes on, the narrator interrupts and says, "... their talk about sex had led them to experiment with each other, but they were vaguely convinced that that it did not approximate to the real thing. Such fraternal homosexuality is not uncommon in Pakistan..." (58). I have no statistical data to contest the statement about "fraternal homosexuality" in the country. But, surely, it suggests the writer's desire to educate the reader about a societal issue in Pakistan. From the point of view of style, such sociological statements (there are plenty in the novel) are a serious flaw.

However, one might argue that there is a strong sense of external reality despite the novel's strong representation of the social realities. This is evident from the depiction of the landscape and its relationship with the individual characters, for instance, Aziz Khan. But, Ghose's treatment of historical substance is not because what D.A. Williams calls, "too much historical material ... can be an embarrassment"(277). Rather, Ghose is focused on the socio-political condition. While I agree that it is difficult to avoid Pakistan and its politics when one is writing a novel like *Aziz Khan*, which is set in Pakistan. But it does not mean that the political situation is merely used as a backdrop, and in no way treats it as a central concern of the novel. *Aziz Khan*, as I have argued, remains concerned with the socio-economic situation in Pakistan.

Above all, the novel deals with the question of being in a world of exploitative forces. Aziz Khan, lives in harmony with his land. The narrator says: "...what seemed most satisfactory to Aziz Khan was the horizon, the sky touching the sprouting sugarcane stems, was a definite existence on his own land, that it was a dome which enclosed him and all that belonged to him" (16). And Aziz Khan "had never observed the world as a separate existence from himself" (221). This harmony of course is pitched against the modernization, and gets destroyed. In his preface to the Oxford UP edition of the novel Ghose argues:

It was this perception of a potential paradise lost to the vicious combination of business greed, a military tyranny's lust for power and an increasingly assertive priesthood's repressive imposition on society, all three of which have been the common forces of exploitation throughout history, that led me to create in Aziz Khan a symbolic monument—a small one perhaps—for the goodness that could have been the foundation of a beautiful country. In my mind, he [Aziz Khan] still stands there, in the middle of a great fertile plain, a gigantic figure as though carved out of granite, staring out with stony resignation and patience at the evil winds howling around his head. (n. pag.)

Indeed Aziz Khan is a "gigantic figure," who has stood against the vicious system, but gets crushed by treachery and intrigue. The above quote sums up not only the novel, but the whole situation of the country, and more importantly, the dilemma of the post-independence societies: capitalistic greed, disregard for law, corrupt civil and military bureaucracy, dictatorship, and religious oppression.

In order to establish that *Aziz Khan* is a stronger novel than *Contradictions*, I want to, briefly, discuss a couple of things. Ghose creates characters that are generic in their nature; they are not the types that Nabokov would call "unique figures" of a unique world. In *Contradictions*, the Prewetts, the Forsters, the Wickhams, and Karim (the servant), do not possess any unique qualities. They are not unique figures; they are the

types who represent certain groups of people. Likewise, in *Aziz Khan*, the police officer, the deputy commissioner, the foreman, and the broker are typical figures. They are the products of the corrupt system which represent the social structure.

There are simple as well as complex characters in both these novels. In *Aziz Khan*, for example, Aziz Khan and his family are uneducated—i.e., they did not go to school. They are simple characters. 'Lahore' becomes 'Erohal' for Aziz Khan. He cannot pronounce it right. When he was being destroyed, his inability to express himself in proper language further becomes evident. The narrator mediates and helps one to understand his situation. The narrator's mediation, specifically in the case of Aziz Khan, does not affect the natural flow of the narrative, for I realize that it complements Aziz Khan's character and his situation. However, in the case of Sylvia, for instance, in *Contradictions*, the mediation of the narrator is redundant. Sylvia, as we have seen, is only seemingly a complex character. When she gets too complex, the narrator mediates and explains what is going on in her mind. The narrator's explanation in the case of Sylvia is inordinate. This is problematic, for the imagery often very well explains the situation. In the case of Sylvia, it is an attempt to describe a situation—or elaborate it—confining the thoughts to bourgeoisie subjectivity. Sylvia, indeed, is a suitable character to effectively reveal the mindlessness of these parties. But the silences and the images are sufficient to reveal it all. Olivia in *Contradictions* does not receive such narrative help for her complex situations. Karim, the Indian servant, does not have any expression. When the light catches his forehead, we see sweat on it, revealing his predicament. Thus, it reflects Karim's inability to speak in presence of authority. Similarly, at the viceroy's party, the honorable people are “served by silent and expressionless Indian bearers who

[keep] their thoughts within their turbans” (64). Is the narrator helping here to explain about the Indian servants or constructing their image as servants? I tend to believe that it is more about the construction of their image as much as the depiction of authority.

Yet another important aspect for the sake of comparison is the issue of flash back scenes. Flash back scenes, in the case of *Contradictions*, interrupt the flow of the story. In *Aziz Khan*, such flash back scenes try to portray the predicament of the character. The court scene in the novel is a case in point which reveals the issue of authority, where Javed is described as being unable to understand the present situation. He reflects on his past and finds himself in happiness and faith. Although the novel is not written in a stream of consciousness mode, the flash back scene does not become intrusive. The reason it does not become intrusive is because it highlights the changing circumstances in Javed’s life. In the case of the present he is battling against the society, and its authority; whereas, in the case of his memories, he is fighting against the nature. Defeat of the moment reminds him of the victory of the past; the boundaries of present and past blur, and truly make him a tragic figure.

In the final analysis, in both *Contradictions* and *Aziz Khan*, the paramount consideration is the treatment of political and social milieu. In *Contradictions*, we see the superfluous life of the British and the mindless talk of the characters. *Aziz Khan* on the other hand, reflects the tension between haves and have nots; the agrarian and the industrial; the changing patterns of life; and the corrupt bureaucracy. Therefore, we get from these novels what Williams points out as, “ an understanding of the social and economic relationships which obtain at a particular juncture, together with an awareness of the main ideological differences separating generations and classes”(268).

In spite of similar notions in both these novels such as traditional and non-traditional ways of exercising authority, domination, exploitation, *Aziz Khan* remains larger in scope than *Contradictions*. The former has successfully tried to capture the reality, and the latter lacks the authorial precision to do so. At the beginning of his career, Ghose struggles to create an effective negotiation between style and content.

To sum up, *Aziz Khan* is a greater achievement of the writer in his early career than *Contradictions*. In the former, the reader has what Karl Marx mentions of Balzac, a “deep grasp of the real situation” (qtd. in Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism* 48). Ross rightly says, “the book [*Aziz Khan*] holds a solitary and distinguished place in Pakistan's English-language writing, and it stands securely amid other such novels from the international literature” (203).

Aziz Khan remains a major work of art; however, the historians of the South Asian English language fiction did not pay much attention to this novel. Pakistan's socio-political condition, as stated earlier, remains fundamental to this novel which goes counter to Ghose's overall ideas about art and fiction writing. Ghose's thought upon the completion of this novel is worth mentioning: “When I finished it, I thought it solid enough, but a form in which I would not wish to work again. Having proved that I could write a traditional novel, I turned to what interested my imagination, [and] I wrote *Crump's Terms*” (qtd. in Kanaganayakam 53).

Chapter Two

The Trilogy: *The Incredible Brazilian*¹⁹

Ghose's third novel, *Crump's Terms*, was rejected by many publishers; he was told that he was wasting his time.²⁰ Can we say then that Ghose wrote the trilogy to keep himself in the publishing industry? Because *The Murder of Aziz Khan* has received a much better response than *Crump's Terms*, Ghose, understandably, rewrites the socio-political issues of the former in the trilogy. Since the rejection of an experimental work like *Crump's Terms* is disappointing for Ghose who was a young writer then, it makes sense to turn to a form which offers broader scope to accommodate realistic subject matter. Ghose, as we know, has already achieved this landmark in *Aziz Khan* by successfully representing the socio-political exploitation in Pakistan. In *Aziz Khan*, the issues of sexual politics, the lust for power, economic exploitation, and a vulgar display of authority remain central to it. These issues are central to the trilogy as well, but in a style which foregrounds the writer's experimentation with the form.

The trilogy *The Incredible Brazilian* is a complex work; but it is relatively unknown. Like Ghose's other works, it is overlooked by the critics of the postcolonial era. With the exception of Kanaganayakam's treatment in *Structures*, we only find a few reviews on the trilogy. This has to do, perhaps, with the increasingly predisposed attitude of reading a text on the basis of the author's nationality or country of origin. It seems that the natural question before the critics is then why a writer of Pakistani origin would set

¹⁹ In the formation of this chapter, I have benefited from Ulrich Wicks' modal approach to the picaresque form as well as Kanaganayakam's comprehensive discussion in his chapter on the trilogy, "The Fabulous *Picaro*: The Incredible Brazilian." *Structures of Negation: The Writings of Zulfikar Ghose*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993.

²⁰ Ghose, Zulfikar. Personal interview. 9 Aug. 2006.

his novels in Brazil? This is not an uncommon concern, because if a writer comes from a certain part of the world he is expected to write about it, highlighting the miseries of that world in a work of fiction. This concern is prevalent in the so-called postcolonial world. The answer to the setting of the trilogy is that the Brazilian locale has surprisingly little to do with the overall texture of the novel. Ghose visited the country a number of times in the 1970s, and continues to do so today. He states that he had acquired “a fascination with the imagery of the country” (qtd. in Kanaganayakam 84). He visits the country because his wife was born in Brazil. However, we should not place much emphasis on the biographical information here. If we change the landscape from Amazon to Himalayas, the essence of the novel would remain the same. This is true, but this may not be the case if we change Gregorio’s—the central character—name and nationality. If Gregorio is Kurtz and a European, we can say that the whole discussion would slide into the popular debates in the field of postcolonial studies. Therefore, I believe that the critical reception of the trilogy could have been much wider and different.

The trilogy comprises three big novels, and revolves around a central figure called Gregorio, who is reminiscent of Don Quixote. Thus, here Ghose takes up a much older form, the picaresque form. While the form is changed, the subject matter he explores is the same that we see in *The Murder of Aziz Khan*, subjugation, cruelty, and exploitation. The trilogy takes on the issues of the real world. Ghose makes his work appealing both for the provocative subject matter of the trilogy and his successful experimentation with the picaresque form.

My main concern, in this chapter, is to show that the use of the historical material and the formal aspects of the trilogy can best be appreciated if we see it through the

picaresque mode. The picaresque mode provides a beauty to the structure, and successfully accommodates the strong socio-historical material in the trilogy. But before I come to this issue, it is important to talk about the term picaresque, for the term has been used in a broad sense. In fact, sometimes, as Ulrich Wicks suggests, it performs confusing, contradictory duty. Wicks argues that:

On the one hand, we have a historical approach that sees the picaresque as a “closed” episode in the fiction of sixteenth-and seventeenth-century Spain, and, on the other, we have an ahistorical approach that sees it as an “open” fictional tradition, until in contemporary usage the term “picaresque” seems to be applied whenever something “episodic” tied together by an “antihero” needs a name. (240)

Wicks, however, offers a “modal approach” as a solution to the opposing positions. He argues that “fictional modes [including the picaresque mode] are defined by the qualities of the world that the storyteller renders” (240). In other words, the world of the novel determines the narrative mode. The hero in a picaresque work bears a chaotic, intolerable world, but this world represents our world. Wicks elaborates that the “picaresque presents a protagonist enduring a world that is chaotic beyond ordinary human tolerance, but it is a world closer to our own (or to history) than the worlds of satire or romance” (241).

My discussion reveals a great deal of correspondence between the trilogy and the attributes of the picaresque. I emphasize the quality of the picaresque world that the trilogy presents. In addition, I also highlight some other characteristics of the picaresque in relation to the trilogy. These characteristics are the following: panoramic structure, the hero as the main link in the narrative, first-person point of view, grotesque details, pragmatism and lack of principles, anti-romantic approach, and artistic merit.

As mentioned above, fundamental to the modal approach is to analyze the world of the picaresque novel. Wicks states that “the fictional world posited by the picaresque

mode ... is that of an unheroic protagonist, worse than we, caught up in a chaotic world, worse than ours, in which he is on an eternal journey of encounters that allow him to be alternately both victim of that world and its exploiter” (242). This is true to the trilogy. Turmoil and disorder prevail the world of the trilogy; it shows Gregorio as an exploiter, and at times, a victim of ruthless power structures. A brief discussion of the major events in the novels of the Brazilian trilogy will help highlight chaos and disorder; it will also provide an overall context for the analysis of the trilogy in the light of the picaresque mode.

The Native

In this first part of the trilogy, the narrative spans 1650 to 1710. Thomas Berger writes that it is “genuinely comic, truly wise, and altogether fascinating.”²¹ Gregorio, the major character in the novel, is the son of a plantation owner. He spends his youth like a true plantation owner, and, like a picaresque hero, is involved in all types of brutal activities such as whipping the slaves. He is a symbol of power, and an agency of exploitation. He displays his authority to obtain complete mastery over his subjects. Also, he is an alcoholic, and experiments with excessive sexual activities. Therefore, the novel is perceived by Anthony Burgess as “boiling hot and rich in sex....”²² But, as we shall see later, this aspect works well with the picaresque mode. Gregorio’s sexual vagaries are in fact his show of dominance. In his youth, Gregorio’s delirium leads him on an expedition to hunt Indians. However, he soon finds himself the only survivor of the hunting party. After surviving a vast range of experiences, he returns home and takes

²¹ Note on dust jacket of *The Incredible Brazilian: The Native* by Zulfikar Ghose (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972).

²² Note on dust jacket of *The Incredible Brazilian: The Native* by Zulfikar Ghose (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972).

charge of his father's property. Later he ends up in jail where Gregorio is subjected to sodomy, and then gets sold as a slave. He escapes and joins a black colony. He does not stay there either, and eventually establishes a brothel. He acquires a reasonable amount of wealth from the brothel. At the end of the novel, he dies. His death comes in a manner that reveals Gregorio's extreme subjectivity in the sexual act. He has a heart attack, and dies. Gregorio tells that:

... when my [Gregorio] lips were forced against Franchoise's and my hands, which had slowly been approaching their destinations, held the objects which produced the violent shock: my left hand which had anticipated stroking and squeezing a girl's small breast with a hard little nipple clutched instead balled-up rags and my right hand grasped a boy's erect penis. (336)

The above quote sums up the world of Gregorio, the world of squalor and debauchery. On one level, the whole scene is described from Gregorio's perspective who is the dominant partner in the sexual act. The whole sexual act is described as mechanical because we do not see any sense of cooperation from Gregorio's partner. However, from the point of view of style, this description suits the subjectivity of the picaresque hero, in this case, Gregorio who himself is a narrator as well. On another level, this erotic description of love making shocks us: Gregorio, the hero of the novel, dies while making love with a French transvestite. As violent and humorous as this may seem, Ghose ends the novel by mocking the idea of conventional heroism. This establishes Gregorio's status as an anti-hero, which is an important picaresque attribute.

The Beautiful Empire

Gregorio, in the second part of the trilogy, *The Beautiful Empire*²³ is reincarnated. He takes pride in his being “born of a Brazilian father and an English mother” (11). The story of the novel begins around 1850 when the European immigrants were coming to Brazil for rubber plantations. This aspect of foreign exploitation is highlighted by Bilqis Siddiqui who says that *Empire* “is also the story of the utterly selfish and depraved world of the affluent European rubber merchants who ruthlessly exploit the natives by virtually killing them with labour at starvation wages” (159). In this narrative too, Gregorio achieves considerable fortune by establishing certain brothels. But before establishing his business, he runs from home, and joins Brazilian army and participates in a fight against Paraguay. After a number of adventures with his friend Alfredo, he visits his parents in England, but soon returns to Brazil. On his way back to Brazil, he is accompanied by Mr. Hoffman who is an adventurer and a rubber merchant. Settling in Minaos, they export rubber by exploiting the natives.

Gregorio loves Gloria. Both love each other, but Gloria also hates him, for she holds Gregorio responsible for the death of her parents. Gloria marries Alfredo, who masterminds a plan to have Gregorio captured. The crime is in reference to his army days, more than fifty years ago when Gregorio kills an Argentine soldier for defending the mistress of the Paraguayan ruler. After his arrest, Gregorio is taken to Rio de Janeiro, as a prisoner, along with some other criminals. Upon seeing the city from a distance in the bay, Gregorio says, “We [are] now deep within the mouth of the bay, and [Gregorio

²³ From this point on, I will refer to this novel as *Empire*.

feels] as if [he is] being enfolded by the arms of a beautiful mistress, with the bitter knowledge within [him] that her embrace would be [Gregorio's] death" (383).

The phrases like "deep within the mouth of the bay" and "the arms of a beautiful mistress" and "her embrace" reflect a larger image, in Ghose's overall work, "land" as "woman." The trilogy is full of the depiction of the exploitation of both land and women. Since Gregorio exploits both, we do not have much sympathy for him. Nonetheless, from the point of view of style, through these images, the writer successfully registers the idea of exploitation, which runs throughout the trilogy. On the one hand, this combination of death and erotica makes the novel a great work of imagination. The combination of these two themes, also, links the novel with the ending of the first part of the trilogy, *The Native*. Yet on another level, the ending of *Empire* echoes the ending of *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. When the Shah brothers drive Aziz Khan out of his land, they place a fence around his land. The narrator tells us that Aziz Khan slowly walks along the fence, and looks at the land. Finding no opening in the fence, Aziz Khan's eyes notice the Shah brothers' "bulldozers going up and down, up and down," and as he keeps walking on along the fence, the forces of nature multiply his agony: the sun's heat presses "a piston down his gullet" (*Aziz Khan* 315). In the case of *Aziz Khan*, the image of "bulldozers" corresponds with the exploitation of the Shah brothers, and thereby the industrialization. The determinism of the novel, on the other hand, is very well reflected through the brutal forces of nature, in this case, the sun's heat. But, unlike Gregorio, we are sympathetic with Aziz Khan because the latter is a victim. Being a picaresque hero, Gregorio is, as we shall see in the subsequent pages of this chapter, in most of the cases, a victimizer.

A Different World

In the third book of the trilogy, *A Different World*,²⁴ Gregorio is again described as the son of a Brazilian farm owner, but his mother, this time, is French. The narrative in this novel works its way toward the 1970s. Gregorio is sent to the United States for his education. But before completing his degree he returns to Brazil because his parents die in an air crash. Estranged from his brother and sister, Gregorio joins Brazilian urban guerillas. But he could neither become a communist nor a government stooge. In the eyes of the government, he is a radical, which makes him popular among the young people. The revolutionaries make a plan to abduct the visiting American dignitary. Ironically, he informs a government official to avoid the kidnapping of the US Secretary of State. The abduction plan fails. But due to Gregorio's radical activities in the past, the authorities arrest him, and send him to the jail for a brief time.

Like the first two parts of the trilogy, here, too, the writer exposes the issues of exploitation, cruelty, and subjugation. Brazil, as is reflected from the above account, is facing political fervor and revolutionary zeal. *A Different World*, says Anthony Thwaite, "is dominated by Brazil itself, a vast corrupted paradise in which sexual politics, revolutionary politics and the brutal *machismo* of military dictatorship contend" (35).

Picaresque form and The Trilogy

The above account shows chaos and ugliness of the world that the trilogy is depicting. But the important thing is that the exploitative world of the trilogy corresponds with the picaresque form. Stuart Miller rightly mentions that that the picaresque narrative "expresses an intuition that the world is without order, is chaotic" (10). Undoubtedly, the

²⁴ From this point on, I will refer to this novel as *World*.

trilogy, as suggested earlier, paints a picture of a chaotic world. Ghose benefits from Brazilian history to depict an exploitative world. But it is not a simple recording of historical events. Ghose uses the image of “land” as “woman” to highlight the theme of exploitation, and making the trilogy a work of imagination rather than a straight realistic work.

The trilogy has a canvas, and uses Brazilian history successfully. The trilogy is inspired by Gilberto Freyre’s book, *The Masters and the Slaves* (1946). Freyre’s work acts as a catalyst for the depiction of socio-historical events and situations. The reference to the book comes in *A Different World* when Gregorio says:

I lived in a world of other people’s ideas and my own memories; I suppose my solitary existence, a state of total withdrawal from mankind’s preoccupations and sharing a community only of abstract thought, made me especially receptive to visionary ideas: for this was the time when, dwelling on my memories, while pausing in an interesting work of anthropology, that masterpiece of Gilberto Freyre’s, I found myself thinking of a past time when I realized with a start that that particular image came not from my thirty-five years in this life but from a past much more remote. (193)

Before I come to the reference to Freyre’s work, it is important to briefly talk about Gregorio’s boasting of his “solitary existence.” He dissociates himself from the ordinary human being’s “preoccupations,” and claims his receptiveness “to visionary ideas.” But his claim, like a typical picaresque hero, speaks of his ambiguous relationship with society. Like a picaresque protagonist, to use Guillen’s term, Gregorio is a “half-outsider” (80). Guillen argues, “the *picaro* in his odyssey moves horizontally through space and vertically through society ... along the road and into the inn, the large city, the war camp” (48). This is true of Gregorio, who moves from place to place but his social status does not remain the same, which actually reflects the human condition in a volatile

milieu, and the human suffering because of it. Ghose furthers the idea of exploitation and destruction by applying it to the overall structure of the trilogy.

However, the important point is that Gregorio acknowledges the masterpiece work; although he maintains, at the same time, that it is the past memories that help him create this outer reality. The imaginative construct of the trilogy comes out of the recourse to memory. Gregorio makes us conscious that the purpose is not to see or find the verifiable reality in the trilogy. Freyre's masterpiece does not reduce the trilogy to a straight realistic work. In fact, the imaginative aspect of the trilogy is highlighted in Paul Theroux's appreciation of it when he says that the trilogy is "a considerable feat of imagination and novelistic ventriloquism."²⁵

Granted, the imaginative framework is there, but at the same time, the novels bring in a wide range of characters along with Gregorio, and thereby create a picture of social milieu or societal condition. Because Gregorio is more than a simple individual, he drives history and in the process exploits people and land. But at the same time he himself becomes a victim of power structures at the hands of the society, the military, and the colonial settlement, which represents a chaotic world. His story, thus, reflects the story of Brazil. The choice of his name Gregorio Peixoto da Silva Xavier is of note: "The name of the man," says, Beatrice Stoerk, "who had joined a conspiracy against Portuguese colonial authorities and had been hanged, quartered and then beheaded in 1789 was Joaquim da Silva Xavier, nicknamed Tiradentes (the tooth-puller) because of the amateur dentistry he practiced" (4). So, Gregorio, as it is particularly reflected in *The Beautiful Empire*, is a reincarnation of that historical character. One can argue that he

²⁵ Note on dust jacket of *The Incredible Brazilian: The Native* by Zulfikar Ghose (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972).

does not completely represent the historical figure Joaquim, but the rebellious nature of Gregorio in almost all novels in the trilogy reminds us of the former. This is why Kanaganayakam states that “Gregorio as a reincarnation of Joaquim is one of the many instances that gives the trilogy the status of historical/realistic fiction” (86). He further supports his claim by quoting Gregorio who says that he has “been present to witness the most significant events that have shaped the destiny of Brazil” (qtd. in Kanaganayakam 86).

The brutal societal condition is also highlighted through other characters such as Aurelia’s mutilation at the hands of Augustina, and Josefina’s brutal treatment by Heloisa. This can be verified by Freyre’s account that such practices in the past were commonplace. The elite woman “kicked out the teeth of their women slaves with their boots [or] had their breast cut off, their nails drawn, or their faces and ears burned” (351). In most cases, he adds, “the motive, almost always, was jealousy of the husband. Sexual rancor. The rivalry of woman with woman” (351). These ruthless societal aspects of Brazil at this time are reflected in the trilogy, as mentioned above, through the brutal acts of Augustina and Heloisa. Such episodes highlight another aspect that the women are not exploited by the men only. This view may not go well with the popular feminist notions about exploitation. However, it is a fact that in the trilogy the exploitation is class-based. The rich women of the trilogy exploit the poor and the dispossessed of their own gender.

The above discussion shows that Ghose has, indeed, benefited from Brazil’s socio-political history. More important, however, is that Ghose portrays this chaos, as pointed out earlier, through the image of land-as-woman. On one level, this image works as an objective correlative. On another, Gregorio’s plight, passion and exploitation are

reflected through such images. Gregorio compares his own predicament with Brazil's whose "present wrinkle-bowed, grey-haired, tear-stained face" (*Native* 14) is different than the good old uncorrupted days. This comment, of course, tells the story of the country and its exploitation. But we, also, realize that the image of land turning into the image of woman, and suggests a temptation to possess it. The image of land-as-woman is further revealed when Rodriguez tells Gregorio that "the way [Brazil] goes, whether she becomes a grand old lady or an obscene slut, will be our doing" (*Native* 173).

Rodriguez's claim looks noble and high sounding, admitting that the future of the country, in this case Brazil, depends upon the actions of its own people. More important, however, Rodriguez's reference is clearly Brazil specific. But the writer makes it up, and highlights that the issue of exploitation is universal by revealing the true character of Rodriguez who is nothing but a landowner. Thus, on the same page, the debate which seems concerned with Brazil turns out to be a realization that they are landowners and they can be landowners anywhere in the world. We are "landowners, simply landowners," (*Native* 173) argues Rodriguez. He rationalizes his claim which is very truthful by stating that "...what do we do with the land? Exploit it as much as we can for no other reason than that our wives may be able to buy silks from France" (*Native* 173). This is a very telling remark, and tells us about the mindless exploitation of the trilogy's world.

In addition, the image of land-as-woman is also used for rhetorical purposes to incite temptation to possess and exploit the land. Father Boscoli, at one point, asks Gregorio, "Is not Brazil like the most beautiful woman you ever saw, waiting to be matched to the most eligible young man in the world?" (*Native* 150). Father Boscoli

further fuels Gregorio's vanity by pronouncing that the latter is the "true suitor for this land," and encourages Gregorio to make his "business to woo her..." (*Native* 150). What we get from this is nothing but destruction both by and of Gregorio. The use of the imagery of women, without doubt, has a rhetorical purpose which by implication ends up in destruction and exploitation. But from the point of view of style, it helps move the story forward. In the beginning of *A Different World*, Gregorio says that "the eyes of the Brazilian women are flames and their voices are the oceans calling. I swear it. How else do we burn and drown in their arms?" (11). Gregorio explains in the preceding lines that a Brazilian can get his woman even "by swimming through a river full of alligators, piranha and electric eel..." (11). This claim sounds pompous, but it tells us the forward movement of the story, and reflects that he will do everything to possess a woman. We see that Gregorio's desire to possess women and his series of sexual adventures take the story forward. Thus, on the whole, the image of land-as-woman is used for different purposes: sometimes for inspiration and taking the story forward, and at others for victimization and barbarity, the looting and plundering.

These images of land, love, and woman are also found in *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. But, here in the trilogy, these images successfully work as an objective correlative, and create a realistic world which is open for exploitation by the brutal forces: both indigenous and foreign. However, there is another aspect of the images of land. If we look at the imagery more closely, it goes back to the writer's own roots in the Punjab. It is pointed out earlier that the final scene in *The Beautiful Empire* invokes the final images in *The Murder of Aziz Khan* which is set in the Punjab. Thus, the imagery makes the referent more universal and not Brazil specific only. But, more important, the images are

knit together in a way that forces us to pay attention to Ghose's experimentation with the picaresque form, and not the referent alone. But it does not mean that the trilogy does not have a significant geographical and physical landscape.

This leads me to the issue of a panoramic structure, which is one of the most defining features of the picaresque fiction. The trilogy has a landscape, geography, and characters which highlight its panoramic structure. In order to paint an all-inclusive picture, Ghose does not focus on one character or event. As we have seen above there are a vast number of characters, both men and women, along with the main characters with Gregorio to paint a broad picture of the society. There are a number of adventures, battles, and places as well. In order to strengthen the panoramic structure of the trilogy, the writer depicts the sane and the peaceful life of the natives, the Indians. The life of the Indians, however, is not one of the main concerns of the trilogy. But the depiction of the life of native Indians raises some more political questions, and adds to the overall panoramic structure of the trilogy. The description of the Indian settlement speaks to the harmonious life the Indians are living. Father Prado's claim that "the Indian is generous but not extravagant. His generosity is an instinct; what he has must be shared by the community" (*Native* 140). This is reaffirmed in the second volume of the trilogy when Gregorio tells us about the distribution of the gifts by the chief to his Indian people. This highlights the socialistic notion of collective ownership and participation in community welfare. However, the trilogy's concern is not to show the plight of the Indians at the hands of the colonizers. In this regard, Father Prado's long sermon is quite apropos. He says:

When I first came here, I had the missionary's usual zeal. I wanted to teach them as rapidly as possible such words as love and forgiveness. But

I soon realized I was a damn fool to be attempting such a thing.... I've been trained to believe that a world without Christ is unacceptable. But seeing the Indians' way of life and observing it to be altogether superior to our own.... (141)

This is very interesting because Father Prado seems to be conceding that the garb of love and forgiveness is nothing but an imposition of religious authority. Though, as already mentioned, the life of the Indians is not central to the trilogy, but such episodes help achieve a broader and objective outlook of the trilogy in which there are disturbing comments against the natives, but at the same time they are not portrayed as brutal. Similarly, there is no neat distinction between the exploitation of the native and the foreign, the men and the women. Exploitation is portrayed as exploitation. This helps the trilogy to not reduce itself to merely a text of moral outrage.

The depiction of the characters and the societal conditions in the trilogy speak to the fact that a picaresque mode is appropriate to some four hundred year Brazilian experience. The picaresque form helped Ghose to imaginatively encompass crucial period of Brazilian history. It would not have been possible in a straight realistic form, without compromising on the questions of style. But, more importantly, without simplistic cataloguing of the political and historical events, the writer paints a picture which is imaginative and subversive to authority and domination—both local and foreign authorities—through his depiction of the cruelty and subjugation of the local and foreign exploitative agencies.

A picaresque novel strings “together like a freight train and apparently with no other common link than the hero” (Guillen 84). In Ghose's trilogy, the hero, among others things, provides the obvious link between the three parts of the trilogy. The reincarnation of Gregorio in all three novels of the trilogy reinforces the circularity of its

narrative. This is a clever technique that Ghose employs to heighten the effect of exploitation that Gregorio wreaks on the world. Therefore, the circularity reveals the cyclical nature of not only the texture but a vicious circle of authority. The repetitive pattern that we see in *Contradictions* and *Aziz Khan* is evident in the general pattern of all three novels of the trilogy, and in the characters, situations, and themes as well. Guillen rightly points out, “the use of recurrent motifs, circular patterns, and incremental processes is particularly frequent in the picaresque ... [where] these various devices create an objective or a subjective order beneath or above the linear sequence of events” (85). Repetition, in fact, reflects that human condition hardly changes. In the trilogy, too, we notice this aspect of repetition. The Gregorio-Jari relationship changes into Gregorio-Alfredo, and in the final novel it becomes Gregorio-Capistrano. Gregorio inflicts physical and emotional torture on all these women—Aurelia, Gloria, and Amalia—who all show up in different sections of the trilogy. Heloisa’s treatment of Josephina is similar to that of Augustina’s treatment of Aurelia. All these relationships address the vicious circularity of exploitation.

Perhaps the most indispensable part of the picaresque narrative is the first-person point of view. The “use of the first-person tense is more than a formal frame. It means that not only are the hero and his actions picaresque, but everything *else* in the story is colored with the sensibility, or filtered through the mind, of the *picaro*-narrator” (Guillen 81). In the trilogy, the narration is first person, as opposed to an omniscient narrator, which the author uses in his earlier novel *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. Therefore, as it is often quite possible, we must be aware of the danger of trusting the limited understanding of a first-person narrator. However, the first-person narration highlights the subjectivity

of the text, which is appropriate to the picaresque narrative. As Gregorio states events from his childhood, and, therefore, at times, lies about them. In this regard, the first-person narration very well serves the subject matter of the trilogy. Gregorio, as we see, lies. At one level, it reveals the nature of his character. But from the point of view of style, the convention of lying is sanctioned by the form. Guillen writes, “the picaresque novel is, quite simply, the confessions of a liar” (92). This brings it into the realm of confessional literature; this sort of obsession is very well described by Michel Foucault who states that this “literature ordered according to the infinite task of extracting from the depths of oneself, in between the worlds, a truth which the very form of the confession holds out like a shimmering mirage” (*History* 59). Nonetheless, Gregorio’s search is not of understanding and knowledge; his concern is to get control over circumstances in its fullest sense. He is driven partly because of circumstances and partly because of his desire of mastery and subjugation of others. Gregorio’s world view is subjective, and biased. He is so mad in his power that he expresses his racial insensitivity shamelessly. In *The Native*, he remarks that:

... if anyone wanted to see how barbaric the Negro is in his original state, here was a perfect spectacle. At any time of the day, one could observe them sitting on their haunches and excreting, or one would suddenly pick on a woman, push her to the ground and proceed to copulate, or another be seen to be masturbating absentmindedly. And yet when you see the same Negroes a year later on some plantation, the discipline of work seems to make them into civilized creature. I was convinced that slavery was the greatest gift bestowed upon the African. (308)

This is one of the many examples of the protagonist’s subjective first-person point of view. To say that the quote is a very disturbing representation of the African slaves is an understatement. It does not mean we should agree with the picaro’s point of view. But

“the picaro’s own point of view is indispensable in projecting the picaresque condition...” (Wicks 244).

In the case of Gregorio, his point of view is characterized with inconsistent claims. And this aspect highlights the picaresque nature of the trilogy. Gregorio claims in the prologue to *The Native* that he has a “profoundly truthful narrative” (9). But he contradicts himself by saying a little later “that I am vulnerable (and who is not?) to fantasies” (9). Indeed, Gregorio is a man who cannot tell his so-called “truthful narrative.” Any close reading of the text reveals that we cannot take him at his face value. However, the problem of the contradictory statements of Gregorio is in fact a reflection of the subjectivity of the protagonist, and, as pointed out earlier, it is required by the picaresque form.

Yet another example of conflicting and competing point of views is reflected in *A Different World*. Gregorio claims that it is through his “recreated body, again and again, for four centuries, Brazil has revealed the elaborate pattern of its history and of its destiny” (14). But Gregorio talks about the socio-political reality, not the sequential representation of actual events in Brazilian history. He is not recording the events that happened in Brazil over the course of history, but using some of the events for his own narrative. Therefore, later in the novel, Gregorio states, “[i]n all the circumstances that might inflict us with pleasure or pain one can make the self withdraw from the body by insisting upon the intellectual truth that all reality is only a construct of the imagination: and surely, when it comes to survival we’re all obliged to become poets” (*World* 75). Thus, there is this conscious effort to dissociate from the realistic vein in the trilogy. This is a strategy to disturb the reader, but it is for the reader’s own good i.e. to enjoy the

construct of the imagination, and as well as for a serious reader to make sense of the history of exploitation.

Gregorio's inconsistent claims lead us to another important aspect of the picaresque: the presentation of the grotesque details. Robert Scholes says that one thing clearly identifies in all picaresque works is having "a special relish for the grotesque details of contemporary life and an appreciation of the fact that there is always a catch; which makes its tone useful but not revolutionary" (63). The trilogy is indeed full of grotesque details which also highlight some elements of the writer's style as well. In *The Native*, for instance, Gregorio tells us about his sexual encounter with a woman called Aurelia. But before describing his sexual experience with Aurelia, Gregorio claims that he will never tell about his experience of the first night with a woman. The reason Gregorio advances is not that the act itself is of a private nature, but a bizarre justification "that neither the hen nor the cow nor all my fantasies had quite prepared me for this night's [Gregorio's first night] encounter" (*Native* 60). The references to the "hen" and "cow" tell us about his animalistic behavior. But more importantly, he means that his conduct in the first sexual encounter was clumsy and unsophisticated, quick and abrupt.

What is interesting, however, is that the experience he shares with us precisely reveals what Gregorio is hiding by not sharing his first sexual experience ever. Gregorio shares his sexual experience in the beginning of the chapter "A Heroic Performance." We are alerted by the title of the chapter. Early in the morning when the chapel bell rings, Gregorio finds himself in the arms of Aurelia who is his father's mistress. Aurelia's art of making love along with her complete servitude prepares us for the ultimate show of sexual dominance by Gregorio. Aurelia's robot-like precision of every single sexual

move heightens Gregorio's vanity, but she is in complete control over the situation. When Gregorio is absolutely overwhelmed by the foreplay, we stumble. Gregorio looks like a buffoon. A look at the final moments of Gregorio's sexual encounter with Aurelia reveals it all: "Just when I [Gregorio] was about to discharge, I heard a woman's voice outside.... 'What's going on?' A man answered: 'A battle, there's an invasion of Indians.' I passed out at the mention of Indians" (61). In fact, the whole description mocks his earlier claim that he does not want to share his first sexual encounter with a woman because of the shame that he did not do well. Indeed, it is a mockery of Gregorio's heroism. The mockery of his heroic performance is further revealed through Aurelia's comment when she states, "Aren't you going to help? ... 'My strong hero'" (61). But instead of helping her, he feels too weak to walk.

Now, again, the above discussion is to show that the trilogy is full of such bizarre details of Gregorio's sexual experiments. But from the point of view of the style, the writer just shows these things through the images, and the creation of different situations rather than relying on flashback scenes. Unlike the depiction of sexual scenes in *Contradictions*, and in a few cases in *Aziz Khan*, the trilogy depicts these scenes in a way which carries the story forward and at the same time through imagery reveals the true nature of the characters involved in such scenes. In this case, through grotesque details, the purpose of the writer is to show that Gregorio is an antihero—a picaresque protagonist. He achieves this purpose through the depiction of sexual farce, and underlining the difference between Gregorio's claims and his deeds.

Such sexual scenes in the trilogy, however, may give the impression that it is all about sexual perversity in Brazil. Therefore, it has been disapproved by at least one critic

who says, “such things happened in 18th century Brazil,” but argues that “when these scenes are the most conspicuous feature of the novel, then the total impression is regrettably close to Frank Yerby” (“Brazilian Nut” 431). However, the purpose is not just to create some kind of sensationalism but to be truthful to the reality in an imaginative way. Moreover, it appears that the clinical description of sexual encounters is in fact a technical device to show these things with a camera eye, to reveal the brutality and dominance with which these sexual acts are performed. In other words, the writer is being truthful to the reality that he is depicting. More important, as suggested earlier, the depiction of the grotesque details conforms to the picaresque structure.

Pragmatism and lack of principles is also an important aspect of the picaro.

Harold Weston defines *picaro* as:

A cheerful opportunist he is, as a ruler, seeking in the daily round for a chance to turn the affair of the moment to his personal advantage. He may wish to turn the *material* world to his advantage after the manner of Tom Jones, or he may wish to turn the *spiritual* world to his advantage after the manner of Dante in *The Divine Comedy*, or he may wish to turn the world of fantasy to his advantage after the manner of *Don Quixote*. (264)

This is true, and it fully captures Gregorio’s life. He is an “opportunist,” and does everything to turn the circumstances in his own favor. The picaresque form carries with it the questioning and dismantling of myth and civilizational principles of religion and morality. Gregorio destroys the conventional principles of religion, morality, and other myths associated with civilization. Gregorio comments in the third novel, capturing the essence of the trilogy, saying, “... I had sat outside my ruined land and wept.... It had been Amalia who had urged me not to withdraw from the world, which everywhere was being taken over by the barbarians” (*World* 116). This is interesting, for Gregorio sounds an idealist who is deeply moved by the predicament of his own country. But he does not

realize that his own contribution to the betterment of the country is nothing: perhaps he does not want to do anything significant. This is true that occasionally he himself becomes a victim. But the basic fact remains that Gregorio is not an idealist; he is not a romantic: throughout the trilogy he does whatever he can to turn the circumstances in his own personal favor.

Gregorio's opportunism leads us to another important aspect of the picaresque. A picaresque work is also characterized with an anti-romantic approach, for it is believed that picaresque fiction emerged out of a reaction toward romance tradition. There is a good deal of anti-romantic tendencies in the trilogy. Gregorio, at the end of the first novel, makes love to someone that he thinks is the most beautiful girl he has ever met. But it turns out that she is a transvestite, and while making love, Gregorio himself dies. Similarly, in *A Different World*, the writer mocks romantic episodes through the creation of a bad reader; the character of Lucio is an example of a sentimental reader who reads in the hope of "seeing a description of an erotic passion," but he grows—and Gregorio notes this—his "eyes lighting up when he remembered the life of some fictive character" (195). Here is the problem of reading literature where the readers have this romantic ideal of seeing their own images rather than seeing a piece of art in its totality.

The romantic ideals about love are also destroyed in the trilogy through the depiction of unpleasant relationships. There is no ideal love in the trilogy. The relationships are frustrating. In the first book, Gregorio loves Aurelia just out of curiosity, because she has been the mistress of his father. He then moves on to Alicia, who is 'deaf mute.' There are betrayals, a sense of guilt and sterility in the trilogy. In fact there is no lasting man-woman relationship. However, Gregorio's love in the third part of the trilogy

is much more lasting and emotionally involved. As to his love for Amalia, he says, “when I flew on and on in my maddened journey ... to Sao Paulo, to Brasilia and finally to Goiania, looking down at rivers and mountains and vast plains, everywhere on the shifting contours of Brazil was imprinted the face of Amalia” (*World* 189). But his desire to possess gets defeated. She betrays him. But it has a stylistic aspect too. Because Gregorio starts over again, the man-woman relationships in fact help the story to progress. Thus, the character, in this case Gregorio, moves on to another sexual or political expedition. Gregorio’s resilience or his ability to bounce back from personal disasters is also a picaresque attribute. But this movement from one adventure to another and one relationship to another keeps the novel progressing.

Strong socio-historical material does not mean that the trilogy compromises on its artistic merit. A picaresque work has also, to use Scholes’s phrase, an “artistic kind of narrative” (12). But Scholes further argues that “modern fabulation, like the ancient fabling of Aesop, tends away from the representation of reality but returns toward actual human life by way of ethically controlled fantasy” (11). There are many instances in the trilogy where Ghose completely moves “away from the representation of reality,” but soon returns to the actual narrative. In *World*, the third part of the trilogy, for example, he introduces a soliloquy almost in the middle of the novel. The soliloquy is one long sentence that spans over one-and-a-half pages. It is full of images of “marshlands” and “winds,” “parabolas” and “convex and concave contours” of land (216-17). The images are so beautiful that we feel completely absorbed in them. But the writer controls the fantasy of the readers, and liberates them from the world of fantasy by introducing the

chapter “The Liberation” on the very next page of the novel. So, the narrative comes back to the actual life of Gregorio.

But the issue of artistic merit takes us to the nuances of language in the trilogy. In *A Different World*, for instance, the parts of “interlude” and “coda” stand out. Apparently, their space and time does not fit into the rest of the text. They produce what Ghose describes as “an accumulation of brilliant details.” He further adds that, “I sometimes tend to write very long and complicated sentences, a kind of Proustian sentence, filled with vivid matter until the language releases the subtle thought” (qtd. in Kanaganayakam 100). In the trilogy, despite having a strong socio-historical material, there is evident concern with the language, and its artistic merit.

There is a carefully crafted language in “interlude” in *A Different World*. In fact, “interlude” is one long sentence of four hundred and fourteen words: it is spread, as pointed earlier, on one-and-a-half pages. There are beautiful and diverse images “of majesty, storm, calm, love, tyranny, silence, and violence, leading to a sense of suffocation and death” (Kanaganayakam 100). The image of “the air [trembling] with a lover’s hesitations and the land coyly withdraws behind veils of shadows, and the air floats as a perfume from lavender bushes,” is very skillfully juxtaposed with the image of violence, “and ... the sunset over the land with its bloody hands and the wind kicks up its heels once more” (*World* 217). So, there is a description of the flip side of love. Apart from that, the whole sentence exists on its own: an excellent juxtaposition of opposing images which conveys opposing ideas of violence and love, victimizer and victimized. All this reflects an echo against tyranny and violence. This soliloquy of the heart reminds

us, in many ways, of the preface to *The Murder of Aziz Khan*: the author's own sadness about his native land. The personal sadness is conveyed through beautiful images.

“Coda,” like the interlude, consists of a series of images. It is again one long sentence of four-hundred-and thirty-nine words. These images not only reflect the quality of the language but also suggest that these images create a unifying structure: images of “arrival and departure, of oceans and dark interiors. The number of oxymorons ... builds up a gradual sense of people looking and not perceiving, of arriving and not comprehending, of fructifying rituals and ‘aches of comprehension,’ until a sense develops that ‘the country is still undiscovered and is only a secret dream in your soul’” (Kanaganayakam 101). So, we see that the unity is achieved through a series of images. These images strengthen the structure of the novel. It reminds us of what Ortega y Gasset describes when he says that “a work of art lives on its form, not on its material; the essential grace it emanates springs from its structure, from its organism” (75). These images, on the one hand, draw attention to the structure of the trilogy, and they also highlight the themes of the immensity and the incomprehensible depth of the land even after its exploitation: something Ghose dealt with on a smaller scale in *The Murder of Aziz Khan*.

Ghose's skillful use of language is not merely in the vacuum. In fact, his concern with language fits well with the overall themes of the trilogy which has to do with power, authority and exploitation. For example, in the trilogy, the better the people use language the more authority they possess. In *The Native*, for instance, we see that Gregorio realizes how effectively he uses the language as opposed to his father and others. Because of it, he enjoys more authority over others than his father. The importance of language is further

highlighted by the fact when in *A Different world* he gets into a dialogue with the audience of Cardovil, where the rules of grammar are being observed from both sides. In *The Beautiful Empire*, he tells us that “the language of description pursue[s] its own conventions, rejecting the confusing phenomena of experience for the clear line of narrative” (41). Gregorio says this in relation to the narratives of his fellow soldiers who appear to exaggerate their stories in order to achieve importance over others. The power of language is further highlighted in the characters in the trilogy who use the language according to their status and role in the novel. Thus, we see the clichés of an urban guerilla, the language and the diction of a Negro, and the most erudite expression by someone like Capistrano. Capistrano uses the power of language to draw crowds to him. He admits to the fact by stating that “all you have is only a language game in which words are used as things in themselves, merely as signs which reveal the tribe’s allegiance, there’s no meaning, certainly no relevance whatsoever to the reality of existence” (*World* 103). Apparently, Capistrano is addressing the question of existence in a philosophical way. What seems as a philosophical thought is in fact an attempt to tell the people that it is “the tribe’s allegiance” which really matters, and thereby strengthens his own authority.

The mannerism of the prose in the trilogy, however, did not sit well with one critic, Anne Barnes, who says that “Zulfikar Ghose’s windbagging style which involves a heavy use of double negatives, dislocated syntax and paradoxes ... do not always make sense” (65). As already pointed out, the use of language reflects the background and learning of the character in its historical context. However, when the language does not

seem to make sense, it is all because of our effort to see things out of context, and without a realization that which character is speaking to whom.

The characters' language according to their status and background relates the trilogy to *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. But the scope of the trilogy is clearly bigger than *Aziz Khan*. By using the technique of intertextuality, Ghose provides references to, among others, Machado de Assis, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Defoe, Fielding, Conrad, and Berger. We do not fail to notice, for instance, a reference to *Antony and Cleopatra*, the description of Cleopatra when she goes to see Antony, in the wedding description of Gregorio in *The Beautiful Empire*. These allusions and literariness make the trilogy a self-conscious piece of art. Ghose, indeed, uses intertextuality to stay in the literary tradition of the Western classics, in this case the picaresque tradition, as opposed to giving the trilogy any ethnic or postcolonial flavor.

The language, Kanaganayakam argues, takes the metaphorical function. In other words, the metaphors take over the referential aspect of the novels. To him, Tavares's (a character in *The Native*) description of a concocted adventure is interesting in this regard. Tavares says, "Now we were in swampy desert land and now in a thick, dark jungle where the Indians would appear as suddenly as a swarm of insects when you unwittingly disturb them in a bush" (*Native* 219). According to Kanaganayakam, "Tavares unconsciously presents an analogy of what happens to Gregorio's hunting party at the beginning" (104). This may be true. But, when he further argues that "the language takes the reader backwards rather than forwards, thereby establishing a contrary pattern of reading the novel" is not necessarily true. "Tavares ... recalls the bizarre incident" in which a woman is suckling a snake on one breast and a child on the other. For a moment

if we substitute the snake with Gregorio, it reminds us again of what the latter does early on with Aurelia. So we have to go back to reinterpret the novel. This is a contrary pattern in the novel (Kanaganayakam 104). However, there is another aspect to it. To begin with, Tavares's story is concocted, and stays in line with the picaresque narrative where lying is, as suggested earlier, sanctioned by the form. The narrator, like a true picaresque narrator, is prone to make subjective and stereotypical statements. In fact, the statement sets the stage for what is described later on in the same page that:

We all enjoyed it [food] enormously and left expressing our profuse gratitude. We had hardly gone a mile when we realized that three of the men were missing and suddenly all of us were violently sick. Can you imagine the two of us on an expedition and you find me missing one day and realize you've eaten me!" (*Native* 219)

So, rather than taking back the reader as suggested by Kanaganayakam, we are amazed and shocked that what struck us as having been hospitality has in fact been an act of cannibalism whereby we devoured our own friends. All these grotesque details reflect the true nature of the picaresque as well as the ultimate cannibalism which is probably the ultimate kind of domination.

The trilogy in fact very well represents the reality of exploitation. Ghose achieves in the trilogy a wonderful narrative that spans over three-hundred-fifty years. But it is important to mention that Ghose creates this plot by posing problems in the novel and then finding solutions for them. In *The Native*, for example, Gregorio is enjoying the hedonistic life, and a complete mastery. But how does he become a slave? Ghose does this by making him overreach to a point that leads to his confinement. Finally he is sold as a slave. He manages to escape from his slavery, and ends up in the Negro colony where he becomes its chief later on. Here again he enjoys hedonistic life. But he feels

boredom, and leaves the colony. This again reflects that a hedonistic life based on exploitation does not give true happiness. Given the subversive nature of the trilogy, Ghose overreaches Gregorio to move the story forward. At the same time, this particular technique of overreaching reveals that Ghose does not care much about plot. He says, “those who will praise the remarkable plot will never realize that all that a novelist does is to create difficulties for himself and then he seeks solutions for them. It has nothing to do with reality” (*Fiction of Reality* 75).

One may not go so far as to claim that “it has nothing to do with reality.” It is not necessary that we should completely agree with Ghose on this claim. But the fact is that Ghose’s experimentation with form and style is outstanding in the trilogy.

The complementary coexistence of form and style and subject matter is a conscious effort on the part of the writer. It is worth mentioning that at the time of writing the trilogy Ghose had already developed his stance on reality, and the representation of it. He advocated—he does to this day—the importance of the way the reality should be revealed. In other words, not what you say but how you say it. In those days, the fascination with the marketable subject matter was not uncommon in literary circles. Therefore, Ghose states that the writers such as “Hemingway and Graham Greene ... travel in search of subject matter or for an exotic setting ... are the makers of the consumer products and are of no enduring value to the history of the human imagination” (*Fiction of Reality* 9). Ghose’s opinion is important because Hemingway’s search for subject matter is of a popular kind which does not highlight the problems of the ordinary. Hemingway’s content stays in line with the popular American imagination, which is tinged by, among other things, a cowboy mythos. Although, we should note that Ghose

himself wrote a realistic novel, *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. In it, he portrays the failure of the promise of the post independence Pakistan, including the horrors of the newly emerging capitalism and the inability of the old order against the onslaught of the brutal power structures. These issues, as mentioned earlier, are explored at a greater length in the trilogy. Thus, Ghose's search for subject matter is there, but his search for the "truth is to be perceived not by looking at the world, but by looking at the way in which images have been structured to complete the internal, imaginative order of the work" (*Fiction of Reality* 10). And, in the trilogy, Ghose ensures an effective presentation of the reality, which is in conjunction with the picaresque mode.

In conclusion, Howard Mancing has rightly suggested that some contemporary writers have displayed their "preferences by consciously returning" to the picaresque writing (197). Keeping the trilogy in view, Ghose is surely one of them. In order to present his strong socio-historical material without compromising his principles on art, Ghose returned to the picaresque form to write the trilogy. The picaresque form, as we know, provides with the flexibility which is required to accommodate, among other things, a range of characters, geographical landscape, and first-person narration. So, to paint the picture of some four-hundred years of Brazilian history on a large canvas, no other form could have offered Ghose such flexibility as does the picaresque. Thus, while working in the picaresque mode, Ghose paints the picture of exploitation on its canvas through beautiful images of the land and the woman. Again, Ghose uses Brazilian history successfully. But unlike *The Murder of Aziz Khan*, which lacks the imaginative aspect of Ghose's art, the trilogy offers a broader authorial imaginative construct. The trilogy proves that its subject matter is of great relevance, but also a text which is of utmost

importance in terms of its form and style. Thus, the trilogy has the appeal both for its socio-historical treatment and form.

Chapter Three

Crump's Terms and Hulme's Investigations into the Bogart Script

In *Crump's Terms* and *Hulme's Investigations into the Bogart Script*, Ghose moves away from an overt realism that we witness in *The Contradictions* and *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. In *Crump's Terms* and *Hulme's Investigations into the Bogart Script*, Ghose's major concern remains with a search for new forms and style suitable to complement the content of these novels. The former reminds us of stream of consciousness, and the latter metafictional mode. These novels, in terms of content, offer a critique of the capitalist European and American societies of the second half of the twentieth century respectively. These two novels are governed by the issues of ineffective communication and reduction of human beings to objects, which are perhaps the two most important motifs of any capitalist society. Thus, as we shall see, the purpose of these novels is sociological. But the concern with the socio-political issues is not at the cost of style. Therefore, I also highlight the narrative structure and style which work well with the narrative mode and the themes of these novels. The style successfully integrates these important motifs of communication and human beings as mere sexual objects.

Crump's Terms

The setting of *Crump's Terms* is neither India nor Pakistan, but Europe. Both the characters and the settings are entirely European. *Crump's Terms* is a response to the emerging popular culture and materialism of post war Europe. The novel deals with a cynical and a disillusioned school teacher, Crump, who struggles to discipline his students. The novel further deals with the memories of his ex-wife, Frieda: the memories about the couple's vacation time in France. Frieda deserts Crump and lives in East

Germany. We do not know anything about her except through Crump's memories.

Through his memories we get the information that, in her childhood, Frieda has lived in South Africa. In her childhood, Frieda's mother abandons her. Frieda's mother leaves her children and husband to live her own independent life. As Crump's memories unfold, we realize that he is struggling to have an effective communication with individuals around him.

Crump's struggle to have an effective communication is central to the novel. This motif manifests itself through the breakdown of communication between Crump and his students, and Crump and Frieda. But in order to highlight the issue of communication among modern individuals, Ghose does not compromise his style. To understand the issue of communication, thus, in *Crump's Terms*, we need to pay attention to the novel's style. *Crump's Terms* echoes J. Hillis Miller's suggestion in his discussion on *Mrs Dalloway*, saying that "the most important themes of a given novel are likely to lie not in anything which is explicitly affirmed, but in significances generated by the way in which the story is told" (176). In *Crump's Terms*, the issue of ineffective communication reveals itself through Crump's discourse and his students' counter discourse.

In the classroom, Crump uses language to establish discipline and effective communication. But he fails. His literary discourse does not help him discipline his students. It is worth mentioning that, in this novel, the failure of language to acquire authority is in sharp contrast to the Brazilian trilogy. In the trilogy, the skillful use of language by Capistrano draws crowds to him. In *Aziz Khan*, too, the language assumes power, and becomes an instrument of authority. In *Crump's Terms*, on the other hand, language can no longer help assume authority (Crump and his students are a case in

point), and the individuals cannot work out a way of achieving an effective communication.

Ghose does not merely narrate that there is a lack of effective communication between Crump and his students. In fact, he makes this idea persuasive by showing the contrast between Crump's elevated discourse and students' fractured one. The students invent a counter discourse. The writer shows how the school boys invent their own language to subvert Crump's authority and assert their own. The list of words such as "shitette," "turdle" etc are the complete invention of the boys at Pinworth school. Crump is unable to understand their fractured discourse. Because of this, he can neither communicate nor impose discipline on them. But he refuses to give up. Till the end of the novel, Crump keeps using an elevated discourse, mocking the low level understanding of his students. Crump's peculiar concern with language is evident from his rationalization that language is all that matters. He states, "all perceptions one records are indicative of nothing more than the particular language one has learned, the habits of speech that one has acquired within that language, and the extent of the vocabulary one can command within that language..." (217).

Crump is an eccentric individual; he does not bring himself to the level of the students to communicate effectively. He keeps emphasizing the importance of language. John Weightman's observation is quite appropriate in this context: "language, instead of being the rational instrument of the mind, is a quasi-independent medium..." (qtd. in Kanaganayakam 72). Crump is deeply concerned with language. But his concern with language does not help him achieve effective communication. The students show no interest in Crump's rhetoric on language. Upon finding out the student's disinterestedness

in his discourse, Crump rebukes Bill, calling him “deserter,” “fake,” “hypocrite,” and a “tramp on the edge of civilization” (217). It is ironic that Crump’s lesson on the importance of language ultimately reveals his ineffective communication with his students.

The issue of ineffective communication is further highlighted through silences in the novel. Therefore, from the point of view of style, the writer moves from speech to silence. This movement from speech to silence, however, is not a solution to the problem of communication. Rather, it amplifies the problem. When there are moments of extreme emotions, there is a silence. Crump, like his rationalization of the relationship of language and perception, rationalizes this aspect by saying that “there can be silences, a little silence, surely, when the breast has a room enough for a Sahara?” (24) But this rationalization does not work either. The image of “Sahara” to represent silence is curious, for it represents the desolate condition both on the level of the individual and on the level of society. The minimal use of language still points out another aspect of “silence.” When words lose their significance, silence becomes a way of protest. In the situation of total resignation and helplessness, Crump’s anger at the students turns to silence. We are told that “... Mahatma Crump, for his method now was of total silence, a kind of hunger fast. He no longer suffered from the noise, simply pretended to be indifferent to it...” (24). This, indeed, suggests Crump’s resignation to the circumstances. However, the statement has a larger connotation and a stylistic aspect as well. Ghose makes the issue of misery and helplessness persuasive through words like “Mahatma” and “hunger fast.” The reader knows that these words refer to a sordid historical fact when Mahatma Gandhi went on a hunger fast at the time of partition of the subcontinent

of India. Gandhi's hunger fast was the last resort to protest against a large scale massacre on the eve of the Indian partition. Gandhi turned to silence and a hunger fast when his ideology failed to control the violence which took millions of lives. In other words, Gandhi could not communicate with his own masses effectively. Thus, from the point of view of style, the use of words like "Sahara," "Mahatma," and "hunger fast" is meaningful; these words make the theme of ineffective communication persuasive.

The issue of ineffective communication is further highlighted through a dialogue between Crump and Frieda. Frieda states to Crump that the "empty road makes one so self-aware; it becomes so oppressive to hear one's own breathing" (117). Crump replies, "I know. That's a better road, too, but crowded. Remember the time we went to Madrid" (117). In his reply we do not see any real intersubjective communication. This and many other conversations between Frieda and Crump inform their ineffective communication. The language is being used to conceal rather than to express and communicate.

Similarly, Crump also uses poetry for an effective communication with his wife. But it also fails. At one occasion when Crump and Frieda are preparing for the beach, Crump says:

When my love's on the seaside
She's a sailor true;
She wears a white sweater
And her skirt is navy blue. (39)

The quotation is not very well received by Frieda. It seems that she does not like these lines, for they paint the image of a woman waiting on the dock. But, it is interesting that this is one of those moments when Crump is looking at Frieda "without sexual interest" (39). As Frieda prepares for the beach, Crump looks at her from "a pure, unemotional sense" (39). However, given that Crump is capable of writing some good poetry, one

wonders about the concoction of these lines. From the point of view of style, nonetheless, these lines complement the theme which is to show lack of effective communication between the two. Thus, these lines lack the persuasive power for both the reader and Frieda. The reason that these lines lack the persuasive power is to integrate the idea that Crump is not seeing her with a sexual interest. However, as pointed out earlier, Frieda misreads it anyway, which highlights the problem of communication between them.

Because of ineffective communication, their marriage is devoid of real love, and reflects the breakdown of human relations. This is not to say that Crump and Frieda during their married life hated each other. They liked each other. This is why Crump has fond memories of the time they have spent together. They were a reasonably well-matched couple. But the social conditions badly affected their relationship. Therefore, she leaves Crump, and moves to East Germany.

Since Frieda leaves Crump, and he cannot communicate with anyone, this makes him a cynical person. In fact, his cynicism makes him a critic of the society. He is keenly aware of decadence around him. He says, "Europe is dying and its people play games at being alive. That's all my knowledge has made me understand" (220). To convey his disappointment forcefully, he uses quotation from, among others, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." Looking at himself in the vanity mirror of his bathroom he uttered, "O Heart: this is a dream I had, or not a dream" (134). This is a beautiful quotation. It reflects Crump's unsure state of affairs as much as the literariness of the text. Crump's ability to give quotations is in fact one of the most interesting features of the novel. This suggests two aspects. First, it suggests Crump's desperate attempt to communicate effectively and authoritatively. Second, his quotations complement his own plight.

Moreover, his quotations are justified from the point of view of style. Crump is a well read English teacher. So his use of quotations reflects his character very well.

In the context of the above quotation about “dream,” however, a problem arises. And this leads me to the issue of the style of the novel. The narrator informs us that it is “a line from a poem ... not a statement which he expressed or could have expressed had he been speaking publicly or privately, which he was not, unless he was a critic delivering a lecture or writing a paper, which he was not” (134). One wonders about the purpose of this statement. Why is the writer emphasizing that Crump is not a critic? The writer seems concerned about the fictionality of the text by stating through the narrator that Crump is not a critic. And that his quotations should not be read as a commentary on the individual or society.

This is unnecessary on two grounds: it does not correspond well with the style, and we see, at a number of places, that Crump acts like a critic. From the point of view of style, such statements through the narrator are counterproductive. If one is concerned with the fictionality of the text, one can interpret Crump’s quotations in the light of his teaching profession. Crump is a well-read teacher of English, and quotations come to him naturally. But such an attempt by the writer to pronounce through the narrator that the quotation is “not a statement,” and that Crump is not a “critic” highlights another aspect which is related to *Contradictions*. It is important to remember that because of grand-sounding statements of different characters, *Contradictions* reduces itself to the status of a lesser novel. Therefore, in *Crump’s Terms*, Ghose wants the reader to understand that Crump’s quotations should not be read as high-sounding statements or a direct commentary on the socio-cultural issues. However, such pronouncements by the narrator

reflect a distrust of the author on the reader, and impair the natural flow of the story. In addition, such pronouncements do not dilute the fact that Crump acts like a social commentator. In fact, he is pessimistic about the society, and is not reluctant to criticize it.

Crump's realization and his cynicism about the chaos in society is so looming that he himself speaks directly about the decadence of the society. Crump sarcastically recommends that "Europe needs towing in one direction or the other. The slow disintegration we live in. I spend so much time warning my students. We're a little Europe, our school. Muddling on. I once told them that that was the best thing old England could do, just muddle on" (55). The school, as the reader knows, is chaotic. So the comparison of Europe with the school reflects chaos in the European society. One does not fail to notice Crump's disillusionment in his advice that the possible solution to the problems of Europe is muddling on. Crump's hopelessness is reflected in his tone.

To point out the unnecessary ambitious statements of the narrator such as the ones that Crump is not a "critic" (when he is) is not to downplay the narrative structure and style of the novel. On the whole, the role of the narrator, for instance, works very well with the structure and the themes of the novel. The novel uses a third-person narrator. But this third person narrator is neither the well-rounded, omniscient narrator of *The Murder of Aziz Khan*, nor the subjective first person narrator of the Brazilian trilogy. This suits the nature of the novel because its world portrays the marginalization of the individuals as well as of God who is "sulking in the dark corners, having been booted out of the center, publicly disgraced, the decorations stripped from his breast" (9). This reflects that an all-knowing narrator in such a godless world will be in complete contradiction to the

form as well as thematics of the novel. Too much explanation does not correspond well with the stream of consciousness mode. Thematically, the above quote suggests the changing status of God from omnipotence to impotence. In other words, it is about the loss of the authority that God has enjoyed once, and is now marginalized. Yet, from the point of view of style, the reader demands a more concrete image of the phenomenon expressed in the above quotation because the loss of the authority of God is an abstract idea. Therefore, in the following sentence, the narrator helps the reader with a concrete image of the deprivation of the authority of God through a mad general who is stripped of his status: “The mad old General, cracking his foul-tempered whip on the parade ground, had been overtaken by a *coup*, his autocratic mouth gagged” (9; Ghose’s italics). This is a beautiful technique and in sharp contrast to *The Contradictions* where the narrator, instead of relying on some concrete images, goes too far to explain a situation. In *Crump’s Terms*, however, the narrator skillfully presents the themes—in this case, an unceremonious retreat of the power once wielded by God and religion.

Likewise, the brutality of the war and its effects on the individuals is beautifully underlined by the narrator. The narrator tells us that, after having sex with Frieda, Crump thinks of a “girl in Hiroshima” (55). After enjoying the moment of the sexual union, Crump’s mind conjuring the image of a girl is significant, particularly significant in the context of World War II, which affected millions in the world both physically and psychologically. Therefore, even in a moment of sexual union, one cannot avoid thoughts of general destruction of society, and this suggests Crump’s consciousness about the decadence in the society.

Speaking of style, sexual imagery is yet another important aspect of the novel which highlights the correspondence between style and content of the novel. The boys at Pinworth School do not miss any opportunity to use sexual puns. Apparently, however, Crump shows little or no interest in such puns. The sexual puns provoke in his mind the memory of his sexual life. So, on the one hand, sexual puns of the school boys highlight Crump's lack of control in the classroom. On the other hand, these puns take him into his own past, and the reader gets the opportunity to know about the Crump-Frieda sexual relationship. Like the school boys who never miss an opportunity for sexual puns, Crump never misses an opportunity to have sex with Frieda. Frieda, however, remains disinterested for the most part. Frieda's lack of cooperation in their sexual relationship highlights, again, their relationship devoid of love. However, by the end of the novel the sexual puns by the boys do not incite his vigorous sexual fantasies. When the boys are doing their class work, one of them asks the other "got a rubber?" To this, the boy responds, "No mate, I'm on the pill..." (224). The narrator jumps in and takes the reader into another space and time where Crump is being shown walking in the woods, while the leafless branches of the trees hang limply. This image of woods and limply hanging leafless branches of the trees suggest his old age and loneliness. Thus the narrator successfully prepares the ground for Crump's speculative question. He asks, "what's become of all the gold used to hang and brush their bosoms?" He himself replies, "I feel chilly and grown old" (224). The whole image highlights nothing but Crump's loneliness.

Crump's Terms is conscious of the decadence in modern European society, and its impact on the individuals. Crump's plight and his meaninglessness in his life is highlighted in Michael Thorpe's comments when he states that "godless Crump" passes

his times “speculating on the meaninglessness of his and all other lives in what is at once the most technologically sophisticated and the most illiterate and amoral of civilizations” (51).

To sum up, Ghose’s movement from straight realistic works to more experimental modes such as a stream of consciousness mode is in fact a movement from the depiction of exploitation and cruelty in traditional societies to the depiction of a modern phenomenon of ineffective communication. The writer’s narrative technique and style complement this theme. However, publishers expected him to write in the pattern of *The Murder of Aziz Khan*; therefore, Ghose had problems in finding a publisher. He says, “What happened to *Crump’s Terms* was that, when I finished it in 1968 and sent it to Macmillan, they rejected it. Several other publishers rejected it, too ... nobody wanted it. Everybody said that I was wasting my time” (qtd. in Kanaganayakam 79). Ghose’s humble admission about the rejection of the novel by several publishers reminds us about many good writers of the past struggling for finding a publisher for their works. Nonetheless, *Crump’s Terms* is a proof that Ghose has successfully experimented with a stream of consciousness mode, highlighting the issue of ineffective communication in modern European society.

Hulme’s Investigations into the Bogart Script

Hulme’s Investigations explores the issues of a capitalist society in which there are no genuine human relationships, for the human body is reduced to mere sexual object. The writer highlights this fact through the description of the human body in his minimalist prose, and shows us how the characters, both men and women, view each other in undignified ways.

The way the issue of communication is central to *Crump's Terms*, the reduction of human beings to mere sexual objects becomes the main concern of *Hulme's Investigations into the Bogart Script*²⁶. Alamgir Hashmi, a Pakistani poet and a critic, rightly suggests that "... the anguish of the individual self entangled in a web of unredeemed personal, social, and ideological frames, are all common features to be discerned between *Crump's Terms* and *Hulme's Investigations*" (157). In *Hulme's Investigations*, the individuals are entangled in socio-ideological structures informed by capitalism. These structures reduce the individuals to the level of mere sexual objects. I shall come to it later in this chapter. However, the immediate concern of this section is to focus on the style and the narrative strategy of *Hulme's Investigations*, and toward the end of the chapter highlight the issue of unreal human relationships due to the reduction of human body to a mere sexual object: it reveals itself through the camera-eye narration of the novel.

Kanaganayakam views the novel "as a verbal construct" (117). This view ascertains its strength from the notion that metafictional texts are concerned with "the construction of a fictional illusion ... and the laying bare of that illusion" (Waugh 6). Kanaganayakam further supports his view by quoting Ghose, who asks, "why not have a text that is simply a structure of language, which is based not upon preconceived ideas, which is not trying to put forward ideas that the writer has, which does not have a story or plot, but which is still fiction" (Kanaganayakam 117)?

It seems that Ghose answered this question by writing *Hulme's Investigations*. The structure of the novel, the forward movement, or its plot, is difficult to summarize.

²⁶ From this point on, I will refer to this novel as *Hulme's Investigations*.

The novel's different sections are tenuously linked; there is no traditional unity. As a matter of fact, the novel affects a complete disregard for genres. The language is dense, poetical, and minimalist. It has no conventional story; it has no conventional form.

Ghose's choice of the epigraph from Malcolm Lowry precisely forecasts the formal design of his novel: "... what the story is all about, who the protagonist may be, seems of small account beside the explosion of particular moments." *Hulme's Investigations* is indeed a succession of exploding moments.

The epigraph reflects Ghose's insouciance from the sociological matter in the text. But this sort of apathy to the socio-political concerns is not surprising. It is not a new thing in twentieth-century fiction. The likes of Sterne, Unamuno, Borges, Nabokov, Pynchon, have done this. Nabokov, for example, famously noted that: "Politics and economics, atomic bombs, primitive and abstract art forms, the entire Orient, symptoms of "thaw" in Soviet Russia, the Future of Mankind, and so on, leave me supremely indifferent." (*Bend Sinister* vi). Like many other twentieth century writers, Ghose, too, shares Nabokov's indifference to the socio-political issues, and boundless love for aesthetics. Theoretically, Ghose is absorbed in aesthetics. However, such curious denials by these writers, including Ghose, should not be taken at face value completely. Any close reading of text, in this case *Hulme's Investigations*, warns us about the sociological engagement of it. However, I want to mention, again, that socio-political engagement of the text does not come at the cost of style and structure. When we pay attention to the narrative style and structure, the subject matter couched in the narrative automatically reveals itself. The correlation between style and content make the narrative persuasive and effective.

The novel draws its substance from popular cultural forms. Ewing Campbell says that Ghose “sifts the detritus of popular culture and genre fiction ... for the materials with which to construct his novel: cowboys and Indians, gangsters and detectives, the clichés of uncounted movies, paperback novels, television series, and radio dramas” (225). Ghose uses these popular cultural productions such as the ones mentioned by Campbell for creating an extremely ambitious novel. But he uses American popular cultural practices in a way which makes the novel an imaginative as well as a sociologically engaged text. We do not get the impression that Ghose is concerned with preconceived notions. Yet, at the same time, the writer’s concern with the language does not strip the novel from its subversive quality.

The novel’s concern with the contemporary society is underlined by Hashmi who states that “as [Ghose’s] three-part novel *The Incredible Brazilian* gave us exemplary historical romance, and in the sense in which *Crump’s Terms* was his English or European novel, the present book is his American novel, combining the best of both” (157). Hashmi probably means that in terms of its subject matter, setting, and characters, *Hulme’s Investigations* is an American novel. But what really makes the novel interesting is the author’s style, and to use Hashmi’s phrase “camera-eye narration” (157). In his *The Fiction of Reality*, Ghose states that “... the writer's struggle is not with his subject matter and not with form, but with style. Sometimes the struggle with style involves one in a prior struggle with form; never, however, with subject matter” (65). This is true to this novel. In this novel the writer is concerned with style so much that he mocks the important subject matter, in this case “scream,” reducing it to the level of a cliché.

The Scream, I had said, holding the razor in my hand, is not only the ‘The Cry’ in Edvard Munch’s picture, it is also there as a motif in modern

consciousness, appearing in literature and music. The plague victims in Camus's novel scream, there is a terrifying symphony of screaming voices when the boy in the ward is dying and all the other victims take up his cry, there is more than one scream in 'Guernica,' and every rock album is filled with screams.... And you and I have seen naked Southeast Asian children on the evening newscast, running, their bodies burning with napalm, screaming.... The scream has become such a cliché that art has turned toward silence... (5)

Despite the writer's concern with style, references to the artists like Munch, Camus, and Picasso are curious. Any reference, for example, to Munch's *The Scream* automatically brings in the problems of modern society such as alienation. Booker's views in this context, especially in relation to the first sentence of the above quote, are quite apropos: alienation is "the modernist trope par excellence ... because of its centrality to modernist art (Munch's *The Scream* is paradigmatic)..." (*Ulysses* 41). Thus, even if the writer is downplaying the subject matter, the intertextual references such as the ones mentioned in the text draw attention to the sordid historical realities manifested in art.

However, Ghose's concern with style and language in *Hulme's Investigations* is so big—rather too big—that Campbell says that "language qua language becomes the objective correlative of the work..." (225-6). This is true that the language works in this novel as an objective correlative. Indeed, the novel is concerned with its language. There are word plays in it. There is nothing wrong in having an obsession with language in a novel. Since these word plays do have a—to use Hutcheon's phrase—"creative suggestiveness," we can interpret them in meaningful ways. For example, as mentioned above, a reference to Munch's *The Scream* will generate a useful debate about the problems of a capitalist society. At the same time, the writer successfully conveys the importance of style as opposed to ideas and subject matter by foregrounding Munch's portrait against the cries in a ward. But, the problem arises when the writer becomes so

obsessed with his ideology that he dictates how the novel be read. It is something that we have noticed in *Crump's Terms* where the narrator tries to lessen the sociological aspect of the novel through direct statements. Here, too, Ghose seems conscious that the novel should not be read as a sociologically-engaged text. He makes us conscious about it through Hulme, who is one of the main characters in the novel.

Hulme states that: “language equals vision. But you will have noticed that it’s the cunning jargon-mongers who misinterpret the vision who sit in professional chairs, not the poets” (103). On the whole, this statement undermines an approach to the text that focuses on its subject matter. Likewise, the writer further criticizes this tendency through the Indian chief who remarks that “If you're not going to use words correctly, then we might as well use sign language, at least with that one never knows how absurdly one has been misunderstood” (126). The reader does not fail to notice that the writer is concerned with the way the novel should be understood, which is to pay attention to its craft and language only. I am empathetic with the writer’s predisposition to form, style, and fictionality of the novel. While I agree that such statements can be overlooked, they are still noticeable because the reader is aware of Ghose’s critical stance, one that detests an approach centering on the thematics. Granted, but from the point of view of style, the statements like the above ones undermine the narrative strategy, which, by implication, shifts from characters to the novelist himself. Moreover, it is unnecessary that the writer is making the reader conscious about the craft through direct statements of Hulme and the Indian chief. This in a way is limiting the scope of the novel which the writer has offered through, for instance, a successful use of intertextual references.

Intertextuality is one of the major features of the novel both in terms of style and substance. Intertextuality, like we have seen in *Crump's Terms*, very well corresponds with the plight of the characters and reflects the condition of the society in general. At the same time, it also highlights the literariness of the text. Linda Hutcheon in her *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (1980) rightly points out that "quotations from one text, when inserted in the context of another, are the same and yet new and different, a microcosmic version of T.S. Eliot's concept of "tradition" in literature" (24-25). The allusions in this novel, like those in *Crump's Terms*, range from Shakespeare to Henry James to Eliot to Wallace Stevens. The chapter, "The Lady on the Staircase," recalls Prufrock. Such references, indeed, underline the idea of tradition, and, at the same time, themes of the novel. According to Kanaganayakam, however, such references highlight the parodic tendencies, specifically mentioning an interesting parody of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* in "Notes for Hulme on Sexual Symptoms," "where the pastoral atmosphere and the pervert carrying the woman to the river echo Angel Clare's somnambulist walk with Tess in his arms" (123).

Not only do the intertextual references and parodies make the novel interesting, but the narrative also gets its strength from what Campbell calls "Scenic Parataxis" (225). "Scenic Parataxis," according to Campbell, is a combination of disparate elements which do not disorient the meaning. The novel begins, "Finally we arrived in the desert." This is contradicted in the next page when Walt, another character in the novel, informs us that "it was much later that [they] reached the desert" (4). Such confusing statements, at times, occur in the same paragraph; for example, in the first paragraph the narrator talks about hypothetical and unclear things, but at the same time adds: "I had a beatific sense

of conviction that I knew the precise place of each fact in the phenomenological cubicles ... in my brain” (4). These contradictions highlight the aspect of confusion in the novel. This aspect reminds us of, in *Mist*, Victor’s advice to Augusto: “And it’s also necessary to confuse. Above all to confuse, to confuse everything. To confuse sleep with being awake, fiction with reality, the true with the false. To confuse everything in one all-encompassing mist” (210). In *Hulme’s Investigations*, the confusion of names is stressed. Paltry-Smith, for instance, turns into poultry-Smith and Coterie-Smith. Hulme is, apart from Hume, Humble, Hamm, and Helmsley. Estelle becomes Miriam, and Alice. Charlie becomes glutton, and then a pimp. Patricia Waugh makes an interesting point that in such works proper names are “placed in an overtly metaphorical or adjectival relationship with the thing they name” (93). Quoting from *Imaginative Qualities of Actual Things* (1971), she says that Gilbert Sorrentino explains his character thus: “the first thing you should know about (Dick) Detective is that he is given this impossible name in order that the reader may ascertain certain things about his character ... a gatherer of information” (93).

This is true at the surface level. In *Hulme’s Investigations*, the confusion in names highlights the fictionality of the text. But the interchangeable names, in particular, underscore another aspect of bourgeois civilization where name changing suggests real individuality as impossibility. Booker gives us his insight into the phenomenon that “like all other commodities, human beings under capitalism become nothing more than interchangeable parts in an impersonal socioeconomic system, making true individuality impossible” (*Ulysses* 42). Booker supports his claim by bringing Bloom from Joyce’s *Ulysses* whose identity shifts “from one identity ... to another, with none being the ‘real’

Bloom” (42). In the case of Hulme, too, his identity changes from Hume, Humble, Hamm, and Helmsley. Thus, we do not know who the “real” Hulme is.

The intertextual references and other narrative strategies such as deliberate confusion in names and the characters’ statements make the novel interesting both in terms of style and the subject matter. But, what really makes the novel distinctive is the author’s technique of “camera-eye narration,” for through this technique Ghose highlights the issue of the reduction of human body to a mere sexual object in a capitalist society. However, with the possible exception of Hashmi, critics have largely ignored this aspect of the novel. Because the novel highlights this aspect, it becomes a politically aware text. It may be true that Ghose does not specifically pay attention to the subtle exploitation of human body in modern life, but it does not mean that one should not look at it from the perspective of the reduction of the human body to sexual object in modern society. Style and narrative strategies of the novel do not estrange the novel from socio-historical reality, but in fact work positively toward its critique of the society.

Because men and women see each other as sexual objects only, there are no genuine intersubjective relationships. It is interesting to note how men and women view each other. Both male and female provide a stereotypical view of each other. The description of the body parts of the men is interesting. Jay, for example, has a “polyester nose” (62), and a “perma-press mouth” (61). Jay’s father is a pervert. Jackie Gross, another character in the novel, hopes to experience perverse love making with the people he hires. Women also view men in the same vein. Poker, an important woman character, states, “Round baby-face with pink rubbery cheeks, glistening hairless chin, Jesus, what a prospect for American womanhood! Narrow rounded shoulders, flabby tits and a stomach

the size of a Buick's trunk, fold upon fold of fat ... here is Walt of the amazing prickette" (26-7).

The comments of Poker may sound stereotypical. But, importantly, they give the impression that the women in modern society are liberated and powerful. And their comments subvert the traditional morality concepts associated with women. Their power is further sanctified when we see that women launch an attack against Indians and beat them. But, at the same time, we notice that women are exploited. Poker, for instance, is a whore as well. Poker, as Hashmi states, "is at once the pioneer heroine of a Bogart film and the 'beautiful princess' (Ophelia/Cordelia) invented by Chief Cedar Bark's priests ... in whose search Walt has been riding" (158). So, the dichotomy of princess-whore status of female position in fact suggests that the women are mere sexual objects. Thus, despite the women's liberated lifestyle which is represented in their statements and in their deeds, they are essentially no better than objects. The issue of women exploitation is reflected in Ghose's own comments, admitting that "in *Hulme's Investigations* ... there is the idea of Poker Hortense as the woman who is being violated. The love of the land has become a gross perversity. All over America there is this outrage of what Americans have done to their landscape" (qtd. in Kanaganayakam 130). So, there is this sense of exploitation of both women and land.

The exploitation of women is highlighted through the exploitation of female body for commercial purposes. In the modern day tourism determined by capitalism, commercialization of the female body has become a standard practice. Below is a case in point. It portrays the taste and the expectations of the tourists by parodying the middle class vacation settings.

... since near-nudity is okay; for the middle-aged middle-brow with their package-tour processed information of the world's focal points for the Polaroid snap near-nudity is something they expect on their arrival in Honolulu, say, or in the middle of a safari in Kenya; and certainly it would be disappointing in Paris, sooner or later, not to encounter the startled model snatching at a sheet to hold on to her precious little wobblies or not being able to make the hurriedly grasped towel reach from the nipplihood of the timid breast to some decent point on the creature-comforting curvature of the barebummed embarrassment that's sending rollicking undulations in the stomachs of the used car salesmen from Little Rock, Arkansas, sucking Roloids in the economy no-smoking section of the 747.

(3)

This quote is a part of a one long sentence which, on the surface level, looks like a direct commentary on the taste of tourists. Their tourism taste is determined by “package-tour processed information.” The object of pleasure coveted by male tourists is female nudity. To complement this idea, the writer does not merely narrate but presents a snapshot of a tourist spot. The minor details through which the writer describes the expectations of the tourists about the tourist points in the world highlight the camera eye aspect of the style of the novel. More importantly, the taste of the tourists dictated by “processed information” is beautifully ridiculed through the description of the female body in words like “wobblies,” “nipplihood,” and “barebummed embarrassment.” All these words also reveal women folk as sexual objects. Not only is it a critique and a realistic depiction of the absurdity of the modern life, but also a parody of the tourist guide books. Waugh states that:

Parody in metafiction may operate at the level of style or of structure. B.S. Johnson's novel *See the Old Lady Decently* parodies the conventions of the history textbooks and the tourist guide at a stylistic level in order to show how they are both very partial and limited means of suggesting the infinite variety of human history, and yet constitute our staple approach to the past as 'heritage'. (72)

In *Hulme's Investigations*, parody works at the level of style. The writer captures the absurdity of modern life by paying attention to the absurd details such as the ones we have seen in the previous quote from the novel. This is in fact a parody, in this case, the tourist magazines which give encyclopedic details about the places. But, as a matter of fact, such tourism magazines only give a partial view of the tourist places. The focus is always to make the tourist places exotic through, among other things, the exploitation of the female body for commercial purposes.

Lastly, because of the commercialization of the human body, there is no genuine love between men and women. The writer, again, highlights this fact by mocking the romantic situations in a modern society. He uses the same technique of camera eye narration. Kathy is a mere object, and thereby represents the dehumanization of women in general. We are told about Jason and Kathy that “Just then a British sports car with the top down came tearing up the drive and braked to a sudden stop within an inch of the earlier parked car. A young girl, dressed for tennis, swung her bare legs out, her perfect teeth flashed as she smiled, saying, Hi, Jason, just heard you'd returned, dimples appearing at her cheeks, her pageboy hair bouncing.” It is a remarkable attention to the minor details describing Kathy as an object. The whole scene is described with a camera eye. “—Why, it's Kathy! exclaimed Jason, looking her up and down, mainly up. You sure have grown, Kathy!” From the point of view of style, the writer effectively conveys that Kathy is a modern beautiful young woman. And Jason's interest in Kathy's upper part of the body stands out as he is “looking her ... mainly up.” But the writer dismantles the romantic situation by describing Kathy as “the citrus-growing neighbor's daughter who's grown into a ripe cliché with a couple of banalities bouncing in front of her” (23-4). From

the point of view of style, this sort of mockery amplifies the theme of the novel which is to show how human beings are stripped off from their dignity by using female body for mere sexual purposes. In other words, it is a commercialization of female body.

Because both men and women see each other as mere sexual objects, there are no genuine relationships. This fact is highlighted in “Marriage and Settlement” section. The writer mocks the idea of marriage and stability by a subtle mockery of a romantic situation. We are told that “... Rosemary was sitting on the steps of the back porch, a young man was holding her hand in both of his and looking at her with what one was supposed to understand was 100% love” (61). The phrase “100% love” raises the eyebrows, as people do not talk about love in terms of percentage. This sort of mathematical way to give the exact information about the couple’s love is a subtle mockery of romantic situations in modern life. In a way this echoes an episode in Beckett’s *Watt* where we are told that “... the lady held the gentleman by the ears, and the gentleman’s hand was on the lady’s thigh, and the lady’s tongue was in the gentleman’s mouth” (8). However, Beckett does not say that there is a “100% love” between the couple. He leaves it to the reader’s imagination. But all these superfluous details in a romantic situation, far from tantalizing the reader, highlight the absurdities of human relationships in what are otherwise romantic situations.

Hutcheon, in the epigraph of her *Narcissistic Narrative*, quotes Raymond Federman that “all great fiction, to a large extent, is a reflection on itself rather than a reflection of reality.” *Hulme’s Investigations* both reflects on its language and reality. The novel remains an excellent example of technical inventiveness and craft. It invites the reader to pay attention to its form and style. The politics of form and style, however, does

not deprive the novel from its socio-political consciousness. The writer's "camera-eye narration" successfully portrays the issue of exploitation in a capitalist society. The novel's subject matter, particularly its attention to the reduction of human beings to mere sexual objects in a capitalistic socio-economic system, makes it a politically engaged text.

Chapter Four

A New History of Torments, Don Bueno, and Figures of Enchantment

The ideal of objectivity is central to the phase of Ghose's writing that includes *A New History of Torments*²⁷, *Don Bueno*, and *Figures of Enchantment*²⁸. In this phase, as Abe Echevaria suggests, Ghose is at "the height of his [imaginative] powers."²⁹ Indeed, this phase reflects Ghose's mastery of his art. These works, however, are equally important in terms of their socio-politically relevant subject matter. For instance, there is a critique of petty bourgeois life in *Torments*. Likewise, Gamboa, the main character and petty clerk, becomes the victim of corrupt bureaucracy and military junta in *Figures*. But Ghose presents these characters as they are. He does not take sides. It reminds us of John Hagan's evaluation of Chekhov. He states that Chekhov's "aristocrats and rich bourgeois are almost uniformly ridiculed ... but the "little man" himself (the peasant, the petty clerk, the servant, the petit bourgeois, the mediocre actor or journalist) often comes in for a good share of the mockery too" (411). Essentially what I am saying is that Ghose does not glorify his characters. He is presenting his characters objectively, without being sentimental about anyone. That is why, as pointed out earlier, we see, in these novels, the pretentious life of the elite men and women of the modern world; the benevolence as well as malevolence of both native-Indian men and women against each other, and the predicament of the spineless hero, Gamboa, against corrupt bureaucratic system. In other words, Ghose does not portray, to use Chekhov's phrase, "a single villain nor an angel," and he accuses nobody and justifies nobody (Koteliansky and Tomlinson 93).

²⁷ From this point on, I will refer to this novel as *Torments*.

²⁸ From this point on, I will refer to this novel as *Figures*.

²⁹ Note on dust jacket of *A New History of Torments* by Zulfikar Ghose (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982).

The real question that intrigues me then is the author's presentation of the subject matter in the style it requires. To Flaubert, for example, "any subject [is] good, provided only that the author could master the style it require[s]," for style [to Flaubert] is "an absolute way of looking at things" (Bart 85). The important aspect of Ghose's style is that the style complements his subject matter. The style and content appear as "two figures in a courtly dance" (in Dasenbrock and Jussawalla 142). Above all, throughout these novels, the style is characterized with objectivity. As already suggested, the term "objectivity" is pivotal to this phase of Ghose's writing. And it remains the main focus of this chapter.

The idea of "objectivity" is a well-known concept in Western literature. Its prominent advocates are Flaubert, James, Chekhov, and Pound. In these novels, it seems that Ghose adheres to Chekhov's ideas on the term. Writing on 10 May 1886 to his brother, Alexander, Chekhov advises him to observe, among other things, "thorough objectivity" in writing a story (Koteliansky and Tomlinson 78). Chekhov's call for objectivity is self-explanatory. Still, in order to avoid the imprecise use of the term, it is important to talk about some of its salient features. Here, I will stick to its four important aspects that are relevant to Ghose's three novels.

First, the writer should not have passion or feelings toward any character. Wayne C. Booth describes it as "an unmoved or unimpassioned feeling toward the characters and events of one's story" (81). This aspect gets its support from Chekhov, who once told Ivan Bunin that "you should only sit down to write when you feel as cold as ice" (36). But it does not mean that the work itself should be cold and lifeless. Or, the work should fail to generate any enthusiasm in the minds of readers. Ghose's works in question, as we shall see, are not "cold." The purpose of Chekhov's advice is that the author should not

let his emotions become a part of the narrative. In other words, he should keep his emotions in check. But how do we know that the author keeps his emotions in check? Only through a close analysis of the narrative strategy we can analyze whether the writer's feelings are under control or not.

Second, the author should not be sentimental about his characters. This idea is linked with the first one. Again, it is in line with Chekhov's critique of his brother. In his letter of February 1883, Chekhov criticized his brother for being too "subjective." In other words, the writer should not try to make his characters behave in ways which please the author himself. Specifically pointing out the problems in Alexander's story, Chekhov states that "you have a story in which a young wedded couple kiss all through dinner, grieve without cause, weep oceans of tears. Not a single sensible word; nothing but sentimentality. And you did not write for the reader. You wrote because *you* like that sort of character." (Friedland 69). So, finding the problems with the style, Chekhov gave his brother an important suggestion. You should describe the dinner scene, Chekhov told him, as "how they ate, what they ate, what the cook was like, how insipid your hero is, how content with his lazy happiness, how insipid your heroine is, how funny is her love for this napkin-bound, staid, over-fed goose" (Friedland 69). It is interesting—as we shall see later in the discussion—that the dinner table scenes in *Torments*, for instance, seem true to this advice. The reason Chekhov insists on the minor details is that "one needs only to be more honest, to throw oneself overboard everywhere, not to obtrude oneself into the hero of one's own novel.... Subjectivity is a terrible thing" (Friedland 69). In short, again, the point is to describe things as they appear to the eye rather than how author feels about them.

Third, the writer should not be a judge of his characters. As we shall see in our discussion, Ghose does not pass judgments, for not being judgmental is an important aspect of objectivity. Again, here, he seems to follow Chekhov's advice who wrote in his letter of 30 May 1888 to A.S Suvorin that "The artist should not be a judge of his characters or of what they say, but only an objective observer" (Hellman and Lederer 54). Ghose adheres to this principle too.

The Fourth and final aspect of objectivity is that the writer should be concerned with showing the story and not telling it. Ghose fulfils this aspect by creating precise images which make these narratives vivid. The creation of objective images appeal to the senses. *Don Bueno* is a great example of this. In it, as we shall see, the writer is mainly concerned with a pattern of images which drive the story forward. Ghose's concern with the creation of precise images keeps him away from making statements that we encounter, for instance, in *Contradictions* or *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. Likewise, the necessary information about characters is made part of the natural flow of the narrative such as through a dialogue between the characters. However, when it becomes absolutely important to give some more information about a character which is difficult to reveal through the natural flow of the narrative, the writer uses retrospective passages. But in these retrospective passages there is no talk about the mental condition of the characters. According to B.F. Bart's reading of Flaubert, a writer "must avoid the temptation to explain the incomprehensible" (87). In these works, Ghose avoids this temptation. He deals with the people and things in their real situations truthfully and objectively. To put it again, it is the ideal of objectivity that governs these novels. Now I will discuss these novels chronologically with an emphasis on the idea of objectivity.

A New History of Torments

I begin my discussion with *Torments* which is the first of the three in this group. In it, Jorge Rojas Jimenez, is a South American ranch owner. He brings home his mistress, Margarita, who is a young greedy woman. Rojas wins over Margarita by flattering her about how he loved his land more than he loved any woman until he met her (31). Rojas's claim, alone, tells us more about his greed to possess her than his real love for her. Although, Margarita is a greedy woman, she is a victim too, for she is the survivor of a revolution, and comes to Rojas's city "when her parents and brothers [are] lost in the revolution that [has] replaced a democracy with a military junta" (33). At the time Rojas brings Margarita home, he has been married for two decades. His wife leaves home so as to not face the humiliation of meeting with her husband's mistress.

The other narrative thread begins with Mark Kessel, who is a revolutionary adventurer; he has a large sum of money, and owns a Lincoln Continental. Later we find out that he has been bored with his life and he is a pseudo revolutionary. Kessel aligns himself "with revolution in contemporary South America and at the same time [seeks], with an anthropologist's enthusiasm, a tribe that observe[s] hierarchical principles and [finds] its harmony in the tyranny of tradition" (42). Kessel's enthusiasm for the search of a tribe that follows "hierarchical principles" makes us conscious of his dubious character, which is revealed later in the story. His search brings him to Rojas's ranch. There he meets with Rojas's children, Rafael and Violeta. Rafael lives in fantasies. Upon seeing Kessel, he loses "himself to a pleasant fantasy, finding it easy to convince himself that all the freak chances that had brought him to his place were the elaborate design of a destiny that had in store for him a great happiness" (104). Kessel uses the socialist jargon "that

farmers all over the world are brothers and have no secrets from one another” (47). But, Rafael and Violeta are more interested in his golden Lincoln than his ideology. While escorting Kessel from the farm in the latter’s golden Lincoln, Rafael, Violeta, and Kessel get involved in a car crash, and after going through a series of unpleasant events they get separated. When Rafael returns to the scene of the accident, he finds that the car is there, but Violeta and Kessel are missing. Rafael tries to start the car, finally succeeds and drives to a beautiful ranch owned by Oyarzun.

Oyarzun is also a moneyed man. He owns a beautiful ranch. He is interested in unique things, and wishes to transform the car into a sheep by a sculptor. In return, he is happy to marry off his daughter, Oliva, to Rafael. Violeta, after successfully escaping a rapist, finds a place with a family who does not live far away from Oyarzun’s ranch. Kessel, meanwhile, takes over the business which is abandoned by his brother-in-law who leaves it for a spiritual quest. Kessel’s true nature is revealed when after taking control of his brother-in-law’s property he states that “It had taken him the best part of his life to understand that the true political goal was not to seek equality for all but to seek the inequality which placed one in a superior position to the scum of mediocrities who populated the earth” (152). He thinks that his life is glorious “not because the workers [are] free but because he [is] the master who [keeps] them in chains” (153). Kessel is to hand over the business to his nephew, Jason, upon the completion of the latter’s education. But Kessel sends Jason on a quest of a lost land. After a series of adventures in the jungle, Jason ends up in Madeleine’s house, which is closer to Oyarzun’s ranch.

Kessel’s car has gold in it, and six million dollars that the revolutionaries want back. But Oyarzun has already transformed the car into a golden sheep. And the guerillas

knowing that the car is turned into a golden sheep, shoot both Kessel and Oyarzun when Kessel does not return six million dollars. Oliva leaves and deserts Rafael. Rafael starts taking interest in Madeleine. Madeleine meets Rafael at a party in Oyarzun's place where Rafael is known by the name of Alberto. Oliva gives him this name in the memory of her brother. Violeta and Madeleine made an agreement earlier: on their first nights, both will exchange their partners. In order to keep her promise with Violeta, Madeleine stipulates interesting details about how Alberto (Rafael) will spend a night with Violeta in a beautiful, dark room. She gives Rafael the rules of the game: "... he [Rafael] must come to the room without a light and not switch on the light when he was there. They would be two bodies in the darkness melting into one. And he [Rafael] must go away before it began to be light" (278). Rafael finds Madeleine extraordinarily imaginative, and completely abides by the rules. Later, on the same day, Rafael encounters Violeta in the hall. They embrace each other, for they thought this was their first encounter after the car accident, which separated them earlier in the story. They enter the dining room where they meet Madeleine. The shocking reality becomes known. Later Violeta commits suicide by drowning herself in the lake.

The above account shows the strong socio-political matter in the novel, and with such a strong substance, it is tempting to think that it is a straight realistic novel. However, a close reading suggests that the substance of the novel is complemented by the style. To be specific, in order to maintain the objectivity of the narrative, the writer is concerned with a few things. First, the imagery not only complements the reality but also suggests the forward movement of the narrative. Second, the writer creates objective and precise images so that we can form the picture of the situation or the scene. Third, since

the novel has a strong socio-political substance, the writer maintains the objectivity by revealing the true nature of the characters through their own dialogue or puts them in a situation where their true character is revealed. Fourth, the style is characterized with (to use Chekov's word) audacity.

To begin with, the imagery and its relationship to the reality, in this case exploitation and the forward movement of the novel, is best represented through a beautiful image early in the novel. The image is about the smell of the decaying beef in the farm. The smell is so pungent that "cattle grazing near the river looked up, held their nostrils to the air and made a loud moaning sound" (21). This image suggests that something bad is imminent. It is important from the point of view of style, the smell of the beef is not out of some supernatural reason; rather, it is due to the breakdown of the refrigerator in the slaughter-house of the farm. Two pages later, Violeta talks to her brother, Rafael, about her wedding night. The narrator tells us that an image passes "through Rafael's mind of two bodies making love and he shudder[s] when he realize[s] that the bodies he [has] imagined [has] been Violeta's and his own" (23). This shows Rafael's interest in Violeta. This brief interruption by the narrator makes the reader stumble, for the narrative immediately returns to the normal dialogue between Violeta and Rafael. But this brief interruption by the narrator prepares us for the theme of incest. The ending of the novel reveals that it is a necessary interruption. We, as readers, are warned about the incest that unknowingly happens at the end of the novel. But the writer does not state it clearly in order to maintain our suspense. The suspense further heightens after Missu's comments. When Manuela, Rojas's wife, goes to Missu to seek a solution for her torment, the latter gives the impression that only "the daughter's blood" is the

answer to the former's problems (29). Thus, the images of the smell of the decaying beef, the "two bodies making love," and Missu's comments create a suspense in our mind; the images set the stage for the whole story, and finally the movement from one image to the other leads the novel to its eventual ending—the incest and Violeta's suicide. Therefore, the writer makes it credible and adds to the natural flow of the story. Michael Moorcock is right when he mentions that "Ghose quietly weaves all his elements—his symbols, his insights—into an intricate but never confusing unity...."³⁰ The writer achieves the unity of the narrative by logically weaving the narrative threads together while complementing the narrative with powerful imagery, and thereby maintains the objectivity in the narrative.

The image of the smell of the beef and the images of the female body prepare us for the theme of exploitation in the novel. There are no genuine human relationships. Both men and women are reduced to commodities. The writer maintains the objectivity of the narrative by presenting precise and objective images. The writer does not give generalized information that women are merely things. He highlights this aspect through imagery. Rojas, for instance, becomes disgusted with his wife because she is no longer physically attractive. The narrator does not tell but shows us that Rojas feels irritated with his wife, Manuela, due to the latter's unattractive physique. The writer conveys this idea by showing "Manuela sitting silently in her chair at the dinner table, [and] her hands clasped on the bulging curve of her stomach" (13). Here the writer is giving the information about Manuela's body by presenting the exact image of her at the dinner

³⁰ Note on dust jacket of *A New History of Torments* by Zulfikar Ghose (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982).

table. So, the reader is prepared to know and at the same time curious to find out what is going to happen with Rojas-Manuela relationship.

Rojas's irritation for Manuela is further highlighted through the image of the latter's uncouth table manners. The writer also foregrounds Manuela's physical unattractiveness by showing the beauty of their daughter, Violeta, through Rojas's eyes, while at the same time suggesting the forward movement of the novel by bringing a reference to Margarita. The narrator tells us that the daughter's beauty "[evokes] a memory of Margarita's beauty, coming to him in that moment as a particular odor, a female fragrance which he [breathes] in, inhaling her sex" (13). This image highlights not only Manuela's aging physique in a comparative context, but also points out the incestuous aspect of the novel. Rojas's comparison of his wife's physique with that of his daughter's, and his daughter's beauty arousing in him the memory of his mistress, Margarita, is important to discuss briefly.

In this flow of the narrative the writer does a few things. First, it suggests, as already mentioned, the incestuous aspect. Second, it shows that Manuela is no longer young. Third, Rojas is disgusted with her not because she is a bad person but because Manuela has lost her sexual appeal. This reflects on Rojas's lustful character as well. Fourth, Margarita is introduced in the natural flow of the narrative, and consequently prepares the reader for the forward movement of the novel: the shift from Manuela to Margarita. This is important from the point of view of style, and suggests that the writer maintains the objectivity by not giving the information about the characters through journalistic reporting, but makes the information as a part of the natural flow of the narrative. The writer introduces the new character, in this case Margarita, in a natural

flow rather than giving a cliché introduction to the character that “there was a woman called Margarita.” Thus, as already mentioned, the writer is presenting the image of the dinner table precisely, focusing on the details. It recalls, as already pointed out, Chekhov who demands from his brother to describe in detail the insipid hero, insipid heroine, and “over-fed goose” at the dinner table. By paying attention to details, the writer avoids generalities and empty statements. It tells us that the narrative is about real, comprehensible things. It is an interesting stylistic aspect, but we also realize that men, in this case Rojas, see women as mere sexual objects.

Likewise, nearly one hundred pages later, the dinner table scene is again presented as precisely and objectively making the whole episode real. The commodification aspect of the female body is highlighted through the images. This time, Rojas’s son, Rafael, sees his wife, Oliva, as an object. He is so obsessed with her physical beauty that at the dinner table he sees mangoes like her breasts, “plums like her buttocks,” and he devours them (111). The author beautifully conveys his possessiveness and a desire to dominate through the images of mangoes and plums. Both for the father and the son, women are no more than mere sexual objects.

Objectivity of the narrative demands that the characters, be they men or women, should not be glorified. Therefore, women should also be represented as real without any glorification and any fear of political correctness. Thus, we see that the women in the novel are portrayed truthfully. The writer truthfully represents the behavior of the privileged and the powerful women. Margarita, for instance, completely transforms from a timid and domesticated woman to a fearless and assertive person. She enters Rojas’s house and expresses her power by tearing down old curtains and throwing away the old

furniture. The expectation of Rojas for a lovely relationship and harmony is destroyed. The writer beautifully conveys Rojas's sadness when we are told that "he [Rojas] saw her do a happy little dance among the flowerless rosebushes" (148). On the contrary, Margarita finds Rojas's land a paradise. She wants to control Rojas in order to get control of his land. She hugs him and states, "when I kiss you ... I kiss your land also" (148). This is an interesting statement from Margarita. But, more importantly, there is no generalized reporting about her. The writer makes her speak for herself, and thus maintains the objectivity of the narrative. This leads us to another aspect of objectivity in which the characters reveal their character in a conversational mode. The characters themselves do not know that they are revealing their true characters, but the reader knows it.

The true nature of the bourgeois individuals, for instance, is revealed through their dialogue. As already pointed out, the writer does not state any opinion; rather, he makes the characters speak for themselves. We come to know the superficial life, for example, of the bourgeois individuals through their own pretentious conversations. Oyarzun, for example, is living the life of boredom. His wife leaves him, and lives in Paris with an old duke. He spends his time in activities such as making sculptures out of old cars. When he proposes to Rafael that the golden Lincoln should be crushed into a sculpture and sprayed with a golden paint, he admits that it is "a monument of human vanity and vulgarity" (78). But his vanity does not bring him happiness. Oyarzun tells Rafael "that he was a man who tolerated existence rather than one who enjoyed living" (256).

Oyarzun's daughter, Oliva, like her mother and father, is also a superficial person. Oliva's superficiality is revealed objectively: through her father's conversation with

Rafael and her own interaction with other individuals. Oyarzun pretentiously remarks and tells Rafael that “like so many South American women, she is infected with a passion for superfluous things, and goes to Miami three or four times a year with the devoted zeal of a pilgrim going to a holy shrine” (72). Oliva’s superficiality is reflected in her own remarks when she tells Rafael that “father thinks it’s mad that I fly off to Miami every time I need a new tube of toothpaste” (103). Her pretentiousness is further revealed when she suggests to Rafael that instead of reading a novel about eighteenth-century Brazil he should read Latin poetry (104). However, Kanaganayakam reads this comment as the writer’s suggestion of the “process of reading and writing” (142). This is not true. What is seen as some reading and writing process or strategy is in fact a casual remark that highlights the superficiality of Oliva.

It is, therefore, important to mention what precedes the above remark: there is this objective description that shows Rafael’s stay at Oyarzun’s house. Oliva comes and introduces herself to him, saying “I’m Oliva, his [Oyarzun’s] crazy daughter” (103). Rafael is in complete awe of her physical beauty. When Rafael is somewhat surprised about her going to Miami for a tube of toothpaste, she rationalizes it by saying that it takes her three hours to reach the city’s top shopping mall, it is therefore better to take a four hour flight to Miami. This is a pretentious rationalization of her visit to Miami. As she talks to Rafael about her going to Miami for shopping, she jumps to another topic and asks what Rafael is reading; looking at the book she states that Rafael should read Catullus and Ovid, and then suddenly she says that he is wearing her brother’s shirt. The whole episode is inordinate, and speaks about her superficial character than some reading, writing strategy.

The view that she is a shallow, superficial person is strengthened by the fact that nowhere in the novel does one get the impression that she is interested in or knowledgeable about literature. She is a completely bored individual who is devoid of real happiness. So, the writer conveys the idea that she is a superficial individual not through pronouncing statements about her but through her own dialogue with Rafael. This is how the writer reveals the information about the characters, and does not give sermons about the characters through the narrator. This technique helps the story avoid any unnecessary interruptions, and thus natural flow is maintained. Therefore, as it is reflected in the style, Oliva's comment about reading Catullus and Ovid is a casual one, and is expressed when they are not really discussing literature, but it is a situation where she mentions to Rafael a number of different things. In fact, her so-called interest in literature reminds us of Eliot's verse from "The Love song of J. Alfred Prufrock" that "In the room women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo" (13-14). Therefore, the writer does not give any suggestion about some reading, writing process, but highlights that Oliva is a thoughtless, superficial character, which she is.

Likewise Kessel is another character whose superficiality is revealed, primarily, through his own admission to the facts. The reader, initially, takes Kessel's revolutionary statements at face value. But, again, his true character is exposed when he is faced with a critical situation. He is a pseudo-revolutionary. When he comes to his consciousness after the accident, he chides himself by saying "What scholarship? ... only the grandiose self-delusion of an imbecile! In this mood of self-abuse, he chided himself also for his association with the populist revolutionaries" (79). So, it becomes only a matter of time when the true nature of the characters gets revealed through their own words and deeds.

However, the section of the novel which deals with Jason and his quest in the jungle and his encounter with the Indian tribes raises some questions about the style and the political content. Marion Glastonbury asserts that in this section of *Torments* “native savagery re-asserts itself; fraud and dysentery are rife; adventurers fall prey to cannibals, and luscious ladies become vengeful harpies, two of whom the hero is obliged to strangle post-coitally” (24). Glastonbury beautifully sums up this section of the novel. There is no idealism about the life in the jungle. But, one may argue that the writer perpetuates stereotypes, particularly about the native Indians. The fact remains that the writer is politically incorrect; he does not seem prudent, and as a result shocks us. It is, therefore, important to discuss about it.

Does this part of the novel make the writer subjective? No. A careful reading suggests that the style in this section is characterized with, as already mentioned, objectivity as well as audacity. Indeed, this section has also absorbing images and compelling narrative so much so that one can feel the true environment of the life in the jungle. As to the politically incorrect subject matter, I want to remind again what Flaubert says that any subject is good as long as it is presented in the style it requires.

To begin with Jason has an idealistic view of the native Indians, their culture and society. When he comes across them not only he himself but both Indian men and women are exposed. Jason, earlier in his quest, is impressed by the equal distribution of food among the Indians (195). But this stereotypical image of the Indians is soon destroyed when we see that one Indian tribe is destroying another Indian tribe (189). The ruthlessness prevails in these tribes. It is revealed that the needs of human beings, be they modern or traditional, remain brutish and power corrupts them. Injustice prevails both in

traditional as well as so-called educated people. But this is not to mention that the writer is suggesting that only the tribes are tyrannical and ruthless. Exploitation is an old malady. Osorio's remarks capture this fact when he says that "the politics of the Indian tribes are no different from those of the Greeks of Homer's day" (201). Although it has truth, this statement sounds a little grand. One may argue that it goes counter to the aesthetic design. But if we see the context, Jason remembers this statement when he is "at the mouth of the Rio" (201). It is a brief but necessary interruption. It prepares the reader for the ruthless politics of the Indian tribes within themselves and against each other. Moreover, the statement comes from Osorio not the narrator. Thus, the writer maintains his objectivity by making the statement on the ruthless politics through Osorio.

One of the most seemingly shocking and politically incorrect aspects of the novel is the depiction of the Indian women and their politics. One may argue that the depiction of the women is stereotypical, and the primitive women of Amazonia are demonized. Glastonbury fears that, at this stage, "bathos threatens" the novel (24). Therefore, it is important to discuss this. Jason and his Indian friend Cocoro get captured by the Indian women. The island is completely governed by the Indian women. No man is allowed there. Occasionally these women arrest some wandering Indian man and bring him to their Island for breeding purpose only. So, after capturing Jason and Cocoro, they put Jason in a solitary confinement (208-9); whereas, Cocoro is held for procreation purposes. The poor Cocoro is under age, and he is to sleep with older women.

The young women in this island are unhappy with the older women, for the latter do not give them a chance to sleep with Cocoro. Out of resentment, one of the young women helps Jason's escape from the confinement. Jason runs away, but he soon finds

himself in a cannibalistic Indian tribe. He is retrieved from there when the two women of the women-ruled tribe remind the cannibalistic tribe of its obligations. The agreement between the tribes says that the cannibalistic tribe will not invade or capture the individuals who belong to the women-ruled Indian tribe. In return, the women-ruled tribe will send the cannibalistic tribe fat male babies to eat. Therefore, the women argued, Jason should be sent back for procreation purposes. The cannibalistic tribe returns Jason to the women. Up until this point the reader feels pity for Jason. The reader is upset about the Indian tribes. But on the way back what Jason does to the women is horrible. He seduces the two women, and kills them one after the other while having sex with them, and escapes (222-23). This all looks extraordinary, but the writer makes it believable through the logical progression of the events.

Although politically incorrect, the important aspect is that the writer does not hold back in his depiction of the ruthlessness of the Indian tribes. He does not glorify Jason as well. In other words, he maintains objectivity through a balancing act. He represents the brutal reality both of the Indian tribes and Jason's killing of the poor Indian women. One thing is obvious: the exploitation both at the hands of the outsider, in this case, Jason, and the natives is detestable. Exploitation remains exploitation, be it local or foreign and is prevalent across the genders. Both men and women of power exploit the powerless and the dispossessed. The writer, through his narrator, does not take sides. The writer just paints the picture. He is audacious yet objective.

Another great example of audacity appears when Jason tells the story of his adventures to Madeleine. The latter gets fascinated about the story of the island where

only women live and rule. What Jason replies teasingly is perhaps the real truth. He states that:

Do you know what women do when they acquire power? They become slaves to the ideal they serve. They exile men from their society and yet go hunting for them, and when they find one they become contentious and conniving and enter into tortuous intrigues. Why? In order to possess man! It is a perfect example of a society which, professing to be unique and based upon exclusive principles, is behaving precisely as any other society does. Is it not extraordinary that whatever their condition people always remain selfish and nasty? (246)

Although Jason committed a horrific crime by killing the tribal women in order to escape from the tyranny of the women-ruled tribe, what he states in the above quote is, nonetheless, a truth in the world of the novel, and a reality that power has its own ruthless dynamics. However, the above quote may not go well with some critics. It can be interpreted as insensitive and biased. But, the argument that the world can be a better place if it is handed over to women is proven false in this novel. If human beings do not address the real cause of the human problems, it is difficult to achieve a peaceful society: a male or a female rule is not the answer to the world's problems.

The above passage, indeed, reflects audacity in Ghose's style. The writer lets himself loose to say without any fear or need to appease any one. But he does not compromise the objectivity of the narrative. This makes the novel an irresistible narrative that shocks us. John Fowles writes, the novel is "a splendid tale of the South American unknown, with a haunting and compulsive narrative drive."³¹ Indeed, it is a splendid, compelling, and haunting tale that keeps us absorbed through its beautiful imagery. However, it is not South American specific in terms of its scope, for the novel is full of

³¹ Note on dust jacket of *A New History of Torments* by Zulfikar Ghose (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982).

“selfish and nasty” individuals set to destroy each other. These individuals can be from anywhere in the world. Hashmi rightly mentions that “the novel’s ‘torments,’ the reversals in human relationships and the ironies of circumstance, European and Indian, are chapters in the history of an increasingly somber vision” (167-168). And Ghose presents this “somber vision” in a prose that is imaginative, and a style that is characterized with the ideal of objectivity in the exotic settings of “the South American unknown.”

Don Bueno

Don Bueno is also set in South America. Like *Torments*, it is also governed by the ideal of objectivity in the narrative structure. Ghose makes the narrative objective by keeping the statements to the bare minimum. The writer’s emphasis is to pay attention to the details so as to form the picture in our mind of the situation or an event. Ghose does not merely narrate or gives the details like a realist, but makes us see and feel the environment. Paying attention to the graphic details serves the purpose of objectivity. In addition to this, the writer is concerned with the creation of objective, precise images. The images have sensuous appeal, and therefore project a truthful representation of reality.

But, unlike *Torments*, there is no significant plot in *Don Bueno*. It is a silly story: Merle Rubin says that *Don Bueno* is “a cyclic tale of a man, abandoned in infancy by his father, who grows up to kill his father(unknowingly) and abandon his own infant son, who, in turn, grows up to kill him (again unknowingly) while leaving behind an abandoned infant son” (4).

The narrative begins when Calderon (Don Bueno) is leaving Santa Rosa after the unintentional killing of his father in a bar. The novel then takes us back and talks about the father, Don Bueno, who killed his own father in a similar fashion and circumstances. As this narrative begins, we come to know that Calderon deserts his wife for the spiritual satisfaction. When Calderon deserts his wife, Leticia, she is pregnant. Calderon finds a peaceful village to soothe his troubled soul. One day, he finds that someone has left a baby girl at his door. He adopts the girl, Sofia, who later grows up into a beautiful young woman. Simon Bolivar, the deserted son of Calderon, becomes a guerilla and ends up in the same town where his father Calderon is living. It is interesting that Simon Bolivar is named after an actual South American revolutionary (82). But Simon's character is not really developed on those political lines. Although Simon later joins guerillas, he is less than a revolutionary. Simon falls in love with his real father's adopted daughter, Sofia. Their brief union ends when, in a fit, Calderon rapes Sofia. She commits suicide. Calderon encounters Simon in a bar, and abuses him in the similar fashion that his own father abused him long ago. He then runs into a machete that is held by Simon and kills himself.

The issues of incest, suicide, and the role of coincidence sum up the character of Don Bueno. Katherina Hormann rightly suggests that he "is neither a brilliantly good man nor a stunningly evil..." (13). There is no doubt, however, that he is a criminal. This is revealed to us through the statements that the narrator makes about Don Bueno. The narrator tells us that Don Bueno "must have fathered a dozen or more children whom he had never seen and had no wish to see" (25). Also, "he would have recognized none of his children, and he was thankful that nature had given him no pleasure in fatherhood"

(25). He pursues some criminal business, and makes money (26). All this reflects his destructive, passionate character. More important, however, is to discuss the way in which the above information about Don Bueno is conveyed to the reader.

Are these statements a stylistic failure in a novel characterized with the ideal of objectivity? A careful reading suggests, no; they are not. Up until the point when the narrator tells us about Don Bueno's debauchery, the writer captures our attention through suspense by creating a series of images. Until page 25, we have come across the name Don Bueno a number of times. But we do not know anything about him. Although absorbed in the imagery, we are still curious to know about Don Bueno. Therefore, the narrator gives us the information in a retrospective passage. But the whole episode that contains information about Don Bueno's life is not a quick journalistic reporting. The writer infuses the information with other details such as Don Bueno's witnessing to his son's first steps and uttering words in an idyllic atmosphere "in a house by the sea" (25). Such details enhance the mystery and keep our imagination involved.

Before we discuss objective imagery, it is important to discuss another stylistic issue which has to do with the name of Don Bueno's abandoned son, Simon Bolivar. The name of the son raises some stylistic questions. As already suggested, the name draws the whole association of the nineteenth century South American revolutionary. But the character is not really developed on political lines. Is the writer then creating a melodrama? The familiar name creates a sensation. Therefore, it is pertinent to discuss it. A development of Simon's character on the political lines could have made this novel a politically charged and referential text. This is clearly something Ghose would not want. And yet it does not remove the question of this choice of a political name.

Thus, in order to answer this question, it is necessary to see the context in which the name was given to the son. Admittedly, Leticia, Simon's mother, has no political leanings. She is a pretentious character, but has some interest in psychology. When she gives birth to the baby, the nurse asks her what she is going to call him. She asks the nurse to pull back the curtains of the window for her, and says "let me see the light." She enquires where she is and what the street is called. "Avenida Simon Bolivar," the nurse replies. Leticia looks down at her baby and calls him Simon Bolivar (82). The whole episode suggests that the name is given without any serious thought. It is significant in terms of style because it suggests a couple of things. First, the process of giving her baby a name speaks about the estranged relationship between Don Bueno and Leticia. Leticia's disinterestedness is understandable because Don Bueno has deserted her, and at the time of the birth she is alone in an expensive hospital room. Therefore, she does not have that much excitement when she becomes a mother. Second, this political name justifies Simon's romance with revolution and guerilla activities later in the novel. Simon's guerilla activities are important because it creates the justification that in the process of guerilla activities Simon can end up in the village where his real father is living; here the novel ultimately comes to its closure. So, the sensation that Simon's name creates is actually covered up by the writer logically and successfully.

The writer's struggle with the avoidance of the potentially political tone of the novel, however, does not undermine the imagistic pattern of the novel. The significance of this novel is that it has no story, as already mentioned. It is the pattern of the images that keeps us absorbed. The novel's imagistic quality makes it an absorbing narrative. In

the novel, Rubin rightly points out: “Reality’s vividness, heightened by the imagination, is intoxicating” (4).

All Ghose seems to be doing is presenting the scenes precisely. He concentrates on the details in order to form the picture in our mind; the concern is with the objective presentation of reality, which appeals to the human senses. This is how the writer achieves objectivity in this novel. The beginning paragraph is a great example of imaginative prose:

Ferns covered the banks of the river that flowed in a dark, narrow channel, with the arching limbs of the tall trees forming a canopy above it. Light filtered in diagonal streaks through the thick dark green leaves and fell on the water in spots of different sizes; the progress of the boat, with its diesel engine sending a ceaseless vibration across the deck, caused the river’s surface to ripple, creating the impression that the spots of light on the water were twinkling. Dragonflies, caught by the light here and there, darted from point to point on the water or on a fern. Several of them in couples, attached one to the other. (*Don Bueno* 5)

This is one of the numerous images in the novel. In it, there is no reporting of action; the writer is just creating a picture. It seems that Ghose is following Chekov’s advice that the latter gave to his brother. Chekov said, “In description of nature one should seize upon details, grouping them so that when, having read the passage, you close your eyes, a picture is formed” (qtd. in *Pure Light* 108). In *Don Bueno*, we see a series of images of nature which have a pictorial quality about them.

Indeed, most of us will rightly look at the above passage as some sort of a description of nature. But the idea suggested in the above passage is of the fragility of peaceful and protected life. It is important to mention here that Don Bueno is in search of a peaceful life. In the beginning of the sentence, “trees forming a canopy” is suggestive of nature protecting humans. But the canopy of the trees is not permanent and stable.

Therefore, Don Bueno runs from one place to the other. The idea of the fragility of human existence keeps reinforcing itself in this image and the subsequent pages of this novel. The light's "diagonal streaks" suggest the short-lived existence. Likewise, the image of the ripple on the water surface, and the twinkling of light spots on it further highlight this idea. Of course, fragile creatures like dragonflies, once again, underline the idea of short-lived existence. All the writer is doing is that he is objectively creating the image. But a close reading suggests that it highlights the overall theme of the novel, which is the vulnerability of life.

The writer registers the idea of the fragility of life few pages later. As Don Bueno jogs, the narrator shows that "a butterfly with dark blue underwings floated past in front of him and alighted on a white geranium"(16). The image of butterfly highlights the idea of short existence. This idea is further enforced when the writer follows the image with the following: "Pools of light fell on the flower beds, coming through the trees in diagonal beams and reflecting in little dots where drops of dew trembled on the edges of leaves" (16). Thus, the short existence of life is not only reflected in the image of the butterfly but also in the dew drops "on the edges of leaves." In other words, the question of existence runs through the whole novel. To mention again, there is nothing in terms of story in the novel except images. Since the writer is concerned with the images, his prose remains imaginative and pleasurable while interesting ideas automatically follow.

Furthermore, imagery, in *Don Bueno* complements the situation. For instance, in the following passage, Ghose paints a picture of desolate landscape. The whole image complements Don Bueno's tormented mind. The writer does not say it, but we can feel through the image Don Bueno's troubled mind:

The river below him was dark and thickly overhung with trees. But within a quarter of a kilometer from the bridge, the jungle suddenly ended and the land before him was rocky and desolate. It looked as though some great granite mountains had been shattered and now lay in vast heaps of broken rock, tiny points of light glittering from the dark gray boulders and smaller fragments. (122)

The image gives us a sense of a bad condition. Kanaganayakam sees it in terms of mythical and symbolic aspects (140). But I think the image is specific, for it complements Don Bueno's condition. If we place the above passage in the context, we realize that it serves the style. What precedes this passage is the situation in which Don Bueno has to walk on foot because the taxi that he has gotten could not go on. The whole atmosphere is desolate and dreary. So, the above passage, after a situation in which Don Bueno finds himself makes sense, and adds to the reality. If Don Bueno had come across a beautiful landscape right away when he felt abandoned there because the taxi could not go on, it would have been untruthful to the reality. The writer is moving the story forward slowly by making us experience it as Calderon himself is experiencing it. The writer is not doing any magical thing or trying to create a melodramatic situation in which Don Bueno out of nowhere comes across a paradise-like landscape. Thus, the style of the novel effectively reveals the troubled situation of Don Bueno.

It takes us nearly twelve pages to reach a heaven-like place. But it happens after Don Bueno goes through the desolate landscape. A few pages later, the previous desolate condition is fore-grounded against the beautiful landscape. Calderon's description of San Clemente de los Andes is a testimony to this:

There were little squares of cultivation, and here and there patches of pink, purple and yellow suggested a profusion of wild flowers. The air was so dry and the light so clear that a tiny speck in a field could be seen to be a house; above this valley, a range of snowcapped peaks and a long plateau

of ice formed a wide oval skylight, and the sky seemed to be one solid sheet of brilliant blue. (134)

The passage is graphic, a scientific description in fact, but it appeals to the human senses. This is the place where Calderon can have peaceful life. He feels happy to arrive in San Clemente de los Andes. Again, the writer is being truthful to reality by creating images. Indeed, these images complement the flow of the story as well as the character's feelings. This is Ghose's successful journey from *Contradictions* to the present phase. In the former, however, often such brilliant images are followed by long psychological interruptions, thus impairing the charm of the story. Here, on the contrary, even when there is no story the writer keeps us absorbed due to the creation of objective images.

However, the above paradise-like image may be seen in terms of Ghose's search for home, but this is not the case. The writer is essentially focused on the style rather than any mythical or symbolic search for home etc. As a matter of fact, in this novel, Ghose mocks the psychological and symbolic reading of a text through Calderon.

Calderon, in chapter three of *Don Bueno* narrates to Leticia the story of his friendship with Xavier Urquiaga during their teenage years. Xavier had ambitions to create poetry. He writes the following poem:

I come closed in an envelope of silk.
Honey my words, my intentions pure as milk.
What can I be in this secret disguise
Who come to you at night and leave at sunrise? (74)

The poem generates a debate of literary criticism between Xavier and Cesar Calderon. In fact Cesar's critique of the poem is very useful. His critique reveals an irony that the emphasis to show reality and realistic content is achieved through unreal words and clichés.

Xavier is a sentimental poet, which is evident from his tears as he reads his own poetry because he is so obsessed with his wretched self. This again highlights the importance of objectivity in the narrative. The following argument between Cesar and Xavier is worth quoting. Cesar says that:

This language ... “an envelope of silk” when “a silk envelope” would be more economical and neater? And seeing his friend’s lips begin to quiver, he added, ‘By the way, Xavier, what does a silk envelope look like? I’ve never seen one. Where do they make them, in China? Xavier groaned, and Cesar pressed the point with, ‘I don’t know about words being “honey”, it’s a bit trite, and do you want the cliché of “pure as milk”? Is pasteurized milk pure?’” (76)

This is indeed a remarkable critique of the poem, and a lesson for the reader to focus on the careful use of words, and not get carried away with clichés in a text. Xavier is a bad poet. But Leticia interprets Xavier’s sentimentality as the latter’s sexual interest in Cesar. She elaborates on the pattern of psychoanalysis. She says to Cesar “that Xavier wanted to be loved physically by you,” and that Cesar also wanted the same thing. The reason she advances for her claim is that Cesar during his teens “made friends with the soccer players ... and [Cesar] wanted to make him [Xavier] jealous” (77). She keeps talking on this pattern. For a moment, a certain type of reader is impressed by her psychoanalytical expertise and sophisticated jargon, but soon that impression is defeated when she keeps forgetting to take her contraceptive pills. She convinces herself by saying that she is busy and consequently she forgets taking contraceptive pills. But the narrator rightly suggests that “Had she subjected herself to the same sort of analysis with which she interpreted the actions of other people, she would have come to the conclusion that she had deliberately been forgetting the pill in order to invite that accident which would make her pregnant”

(80). And we know that she becomes pregnant. She gives birth to a male child, and mistreats him.

Leticia focuses more on the personal relationships than the actual text of the poem. She expresses her psychoanalytical statements as if she were making some profound statements. But it is all gossip. She is the real pretentious character. In fact, the whole episode reminds us of Kafka's famous phrase that psychoanalysis is "a helpless error" (qtd. in Nabokov, *Lectures* 256). This is a clever way to tell the reader how to approach the text. It is in sharp contrast to some of Ghose's earlier works such as *Crump's Terms* where the writer through the narrator pronounces such statements which are didactic about the reading of the text. Here, on the other hand, Ghose just presents the situation without making the narrator to take up any side or position, thus maintaining the objectivity of the narrative.

To conclude, *Don Bueno*, reminds us of what Flaubert expresses in one of his letters that "What seems beautiful to me, what I should like to write, is a book about nothing, a book dependent on nothing external, which would be held together by the internal strength of its style..." (qtd. in *Pure Light* 110). I will not say that *Don Bueno* is about nothing, but surely its strength of the style stands out. Hormann rightly points out that it is "a well-planned work, worth reading if only to watch Ghose's colors circle past" (13). In sum, the narrative's objectivity, through precise imagery, makes it worth reading. Indeed, if we pay attention to its images we realize that the images are truthful to the reality that the writer is depicting: the imagery is not in a vacuum.

Figures of Enchantment

The sense that there is a lack of plot in *Don Bueno* is not the case in *Figures*. And, the content is much more political than in *Don Bueno*. *Figures* is full of repression and subjugation. However, again, Ghose adopts a style in which the themes of the novel are couched easily. The novel's strong subject matter is complemented by the style. However, the strong substance in this novel is seen in terms of identity politics. Kanaganayakam, for example, sees this novel in the light of the question of "exile" and "native-alien experience." I will come to this aspect later. The immediate focus is to discuss briefly the novel and its political content and the style, which, again, is characterized with objectivity.

Set in South America, the novel includes several small narratives about sexual obsession and adventures. The novel starts with the image of a boring office life of a petty clerk, Gamboa. In his office we see a sheet "of paper," calculations, and pages filled with numbers. The writer gives an objective description of Gamboa's office. The whole description of the office scene suggests an unpleasant and boring office life. Interestingly, the writer foregrounds this mundane and oppressive office atmosphere with a painting in Gamboa's office wall, showing images of some islands in the Pacific Ocean. This is important in terms of style. Now the writer is not just mentioning this image without any reason, but prepares us that Gamboa will leave the office and may end up in some far off island. This is what exactly happens in the novel.

Gamboa is pitched against a corrupt bureaucracy. Hoffman rightly states, "[Gamboa] is choking beneath a leviathan bureaucracy and living on subsistence wages" (18). When he is not considered for promotion, Gamboa is filled with hate against "the

ruling class—managers, industrialists, politicians, the military, and those despicable idlers who were born to wealth and used their money to manipulate power—for why, he wondered, should millions have no expectation other than the raw struggle to exist” (13)? This suggests the overwhelmingly political context of the novel. Does it make the novel a revolutionary text? No. Gamboa’s unhappiness with the system is because of the poor treatment he gets. Gamboa’s resentment against the system is not out of some philosophical notion but because of the practical reasons that he is ignored for his due promotion, and that he cannot have the life that he wants. The writer is not glorifying his character, for Gamboa’s angst against the system is not because of some ideology, but because of his personal deprivation. So, the objectivity is maintained, and the writer does not seem to be propagating anything. The writer makes Gamboa’s rage believable thus making the story credible as well as suggesting that he will be leaving the office at some point.

Realizing that he will have a no chance to improve his life, and his dreams of giving a good education to his daughter, Mariana, failing, Gamboa is extremely disturbed. His disturbance escalates when he sees his chaste daughter in the arms of a young man, Federico. He punishes Federico, and considers the same punishment for his daughter. Disillusioned with his life and his daughter, Gamboa finds himself loafing around on the street without any purpose. This happens to be a protest day. Although he is just watching the protesters, he is rounded up in the suspicion that he may be a part of the protest against the government. So, all these events are happening quite logically without any magical touch. The military government gets rid of these protesters by dropping them in the ocean from the plane. By chance, Gamboa is selected to clean up

the deadly chemical from the ship. The authorities choose him to do this dirty job because anyone cleaning the deadly chemicals would, most likely, die. But Gamboa survives. The authorities put him in a boat and abandon him in the ocean. He reaches an island and marries Paulina, fathering a baby girl named Herminia, who resembles his previous daughter, Mariana. It is important to mention that in describing these events, the writer is deeply concerned with the delineation of minor details in order to give vividness to the narrative: there is no journalistic reporting.

Apart from Gamboa, Federico, is another important character who deserves attention. His life undergoes a transformation when he meets, accidentally, Popayan who is a corrupt magician. It is important to mention that Federico leaves his house after stealing money from his parents. He loses the bulk of the stolen money in betting. The rest is taken up by Popayan who in return gives him an amulet. The amulet is supposed to fulfill his fantasies. However, Federico is not sure about it, and the narrator also does not take up any clear position about the purpose of the amulet. In his fantasy, Federico wants to enjoy women and wealth. He has chances to engage in sexual exploits, but with rich, old women. He does not develop a real relationship with the old, rich ladies. This perverse sexuality, devoid of any love, brings him a great sense of loss and alienation. So, the result of Federico's unhappiness and alienation is the lack of real love in his relationships.

Gamboa, also, continues to be tormented by the thoughts of alienation and exile. But Gamboa's condition is justified. First, he was betrayed by the senior officials by not conferring upon him the promotion that he deserved. Second, he became disappointed with Mariana. So, his alienation is not due to some vague psychological reasons such as

identity, roots etc. It is in fact a direct result of the oppressive circumstances in which he finds himself. So, from the point of view of style, the writer makes Gamboa's sense of alienation logical, which has roots in an oppressive socio-economic system.

The issue of Federico and Gamboa's alienation leads us to the question of "native-alien experience." To Kanaganayakam, the writer is preoccupied with it. In support of his argument Kanaganayakam, for instance, reads the following passage in the same vein. The passage states:

Popayan had seen the boy earlier, standing outside and looking at the articles in the shop window a few minutes after the café proprietor from across the street had come to change a note. The boy had a haunted look, the kind he had seen on people who had the compulsion to flee, an anxiety to be leaving some place, without knowing what they were running from, and, in the majority of cases, not even knowing that they were engaged in flight. He himself had known the demon that could suddenly possess the soul and draw it to some landscape as if it were a bird migrating from a dusty scrubland, where it had twittered and warbled, that can discover the full range of its singing voice only when it finds itself, after a journey forced by blind instinct, in a cool, dark forest that is as unlike its native habitat as is the terrain of the moon from that of the earth. (61-2)

Indeed, the passage talks about alienation and anxiety. Yet it is an objective image that creates a picture in our mind. This passage is interesting because it asks us to interpret it as a question of exile or "native-alien experience" (Kanaganayakam 158). And to suggest that the passage "leads the reader away from the immediate referential context" is only partly true (Kanaganayakam 159). Of course, this passage stands out. The image makes us conscious of the craft. But to suggest that this reflects on the writer's preoccupation with exile may not be true. Let us see the context.

To begin with what precedes and succeeds the passage, among other things, is the precise description of the articles in the shop owned by Popayan. The boy in the passage is Federico. He looks haunted because he realizes that if he returns home, he will be

beaten by his father, as he has stolen money from his father's wallet. As the reviewer rightly points out, "He [Federico] steals money from his father to win his fortune at the cockfights, but loses it all to a con artist. Federico's search for the swindler takes him to Popayan's costume shop" (*Magill Book Reviews* n. pag.). Indeed, it draws attention to the tormented soul and mind, and therefore a necessity to move away from the current circumstances, and thus breaking away from the authority of his father. This is exactly what happens in the novel. From the point of view of style, the passage prepares us that Federico will move from place to place. More important, the writer registers the idea of Federico's compulsion to flee through a beautiful image of a bird that migrates from "a dusty scrubland," where it twitters and warbles, to a land where it "can discover the full range of its singing voice." Federico, too, leaves his place to discover life in all its colors. But the writer does not convey this idea through banal statements. First, the writer makes Federico's fear logical by showing that he has stolen money from his father. Second, the compulsion to flee is successfully conveyed, as already suggested, through the image of the bird. Thus, we are not sure that this is Ghose's preoccupation with home, but surely we see an increasing obsession with the style to depict the reality objectively without any sentimentality or a desperate concern with exile.

The novel's style is truthful to the reality it is depicting and making the unfolding events credible and believable. However, the characters in the novel wish for a better change through some magic. The reviewer of the novel points out that "The characters in *Figures of Enchantment* desperately desire a magical transformation of their impoverished lives.... Ghose gives this central human longing an unexpected twist by letting his characters get what they want" (*Magill Book Reviews* n. pag.). However, these

unexpected twists are made credible. For instance, Federico has sex with rich, old ladies. It does not happen out of the blue or through some melodramatic situation. The writer creates circumstances in which Federico gets a job at a place where rich, old ladies frequently visit for recreational purposes. And he is made to interact with them in a way that leads to unbridled sexual activities.

To sum up, *Torments*, *Don Bueno* and *Figures* are perhaps the best example of Ghose's mastery over his art. His terrain is exotic; his voice is unique, and his images are fresh and vivid. Above all, in these novels, Ghose does not seem to be mindful of the popular trends of the time. In this phase, as Adrian Sumner suggests, Ghose appears as "a writer of increasing stature and accomplishment who makes his own way and creates his own world without regard for facile trends or shifting tastes."³² On the contrary, by paying attention to the style, all Ghose seems to be doing is to appease the likes of Flaubert and Chekhov. That is why, in these novels, the signature of Ghose's style is the ideal of objectivity.

³² Note on dust jacket of *Don Bueno* by Zulfikar Ghose (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983).

Chapter Five

The Triple Mirror of the Self

*The Triple Mirror of the Self*³³(1992) is Ghose's last published novel. After the publication of *The Triple Mirror*, Ghose could not get any publisher for his successive novels. Sarah Brouillette rightly points out that "*The Triple Mirror of the Self* marks something of a turning point in Ghose's career, after which he moved completely out of the literary mainstream and into smaller communities of South Asian or international writing" (98). However, we should remember that Ghose was never a mainstream writer, never receiving any significant critical attention in comparison with some other writers from the region. This is evident from the fact that historians of South Asian Anglophone literature, with the exception of Kanaganayakam, hardly mention him. But what happened with *The Triple Mirror*? Brouillette informs us that:

The Triple Mirror of the Self only sold a few hundred copies and was "a huge commercial loss for [Bloomsbury]," Ghose claims. In fact the work itself was turned down by close to twenty American publishers, "one editor making the remarkable statement that it was too good to be published." His subsequent manuscripts were thus not attractive prospects for New York and London publishers, who have easy access to information about authors' past sales. Similarly, very little critical work concerning Ghose has been undertaken since the early 1990s. (98)

This not only tells us about the commercial failure of the novel, but also sums up the predicament of the writer as a whole. It appears that critics do not take a writer seriously who is commercially not successful. In other words, in today's world, market success or a failure of a writer plays an important role than the quality of his/her literature.

The neglect of Ghose's work is further noticeable when so many post 9/11 English language writers from Pakistan, for instance, have earned the attention and

³³From this point on, I will refer to this novel as *The Triple Mirror*.

patronage of the publishing houses both in South Asia and in the West. Why? First, the world is curious to know about the country. And the majority of the writers from/in Pakistan, depending on their taste for the latest selling ideology, are all too willing to become the mouthpieces of the various problems of their society. Second, under certain capitalistic pressures, the so-called postcolonial writers are expected to be the champions their respective cultures. Third, the patronization of a mediocre writer in the name of the “authentic cultural representative” has to do with post-imperialist guilt. Ghose rightly points out that “the capitalist structure inevitably invites exploitation by populist trends, and it happens in the cultural relations between the West and the recently liberated countries. Post-imperialist guilt is responsible for a lot of bad art that the former imperialists dare not criticize” (*Art* 154-55). One may disagree with Ghose, but the issue of “Post-imperialist guilt” is very important to bring up. It is politically incorrect; and one must say that in the American academic establishment this is not easy to highlight. I shall take up the issue of the academic establishment in the U.S. in my discussion on the second part of the novel.

The Triple Mirror is an ambitious work in terms of setting, form, and style. The novel is set on four continents: South America, America, Europe, and the subcontinent of India. In its content and locale, form and style, the novel offers a blueprint of what Ghose has achieved in his oeuvre. The writer depicts a dreamlike world, complicated, and yet stunningly real, full of socio-political violence. Ghose presents his subject matter through vivid imagery. The novel’s dense, imaginative prose keeps the reader conscious of its language; whereas, mindless violence depicted in the novel makes it a politically aware

text. As he has done in his previous works, Ghose's narrative strategy is just as significant as the subject matter.

The main concern of this chapter is Ghose's complex negotiation with style and content. Its style, as Amer Hussein suggests, "fluctuates between decades, tenses, pronouns and points of view with a verbal energy that both intrigues and exhausts" (20). Whereas, the novel's content highlights the capitalistic exploitation in the fictional village of South America, the obsession with the identity politics of the academic establishment in the U.S., and religious and political violence in the subcontinent of India during the fateful decade of the 1940s.

Of course, I cannot discuss all the salient features of the style of this voluminous novel. I shall, however, address some of the issues and concerns that Kanaganayakam raises. *The Triple Mirror* appeared one year after the publication of *The Art of Creating Fiction*. Kanaganayakam notes that "They [*Art* and *The Triple Mirror*] represent, at least on the surface level, antithetical positions" (169). *The Art of Creating Fiction*, as suggested in the introduction to this study, takes up a position which is grounded in the views of great artists: Gustav Flaubert, Marcel Proust, Henry James, Chekov, Nabokov, Ezra Pound, James Joyce, T.S Eliot, Samuel Beckett, Virginia Woolf, and Machado de Assis. In it, Ghose detests those works which are concerned with an agenda or some cause. Ghose's stance in *Art* is so radical against the agenda-oriented works with little or no respect for style that he can be easily accused of living in a vacuum. Kanaganayakam notes:

[Ghose's work can be perceived] as ahistorical, one that deplores works that foreground their message and derive their force from being insistently tendentious. In some ways a continuation of his two previous critical works, this [*Art*] book-length study of the process and analysis of writing

shows greater impatience with works that see no distinction between ideology and aesthetic merit and denounces 'sermons, philosophical essays, and sociological pamphlets' that parade as art. (169)

Kanaganayakam is right that Ghose's critical approach can be easily dismissed on the grounds of being ahistorical. But, his suggestion that *The Triple Mirror* and *Art* are antithetical to each other is problematic. To begin with, *The Triple Mirror* does not flaunt its message. Its message is couched in the narrative structure. The substance is justified by the style. We realize that reading the subject matter through style enhances the persuasive power of the text. Unfortunately, the critical practice of English literature from the former colonial outposts and from the individuals of the former colonies living in the West has been obsessed with a certain type of postcolonial studies' lens.

Through this lens Kanaganayakam argues that "the juxtaposition reinforces the complexity, the ambivalence, the resistance to easy generalizations that one associates with the author's corpus" (169). The complexity arises not because the novel is seemingly antithetical to *Art*, but due to its narrative strategy and the way its distinctive style represents the subject matter. Kanaganayakam, nonetheless, further insists that:

The duality also recalls a similar pattern in his recent short stories that self-consciously defamiliarize the text and his critical essays that speak of socio-political realities. If the short story entitled "General Bakra and Cooker the Cardinal Cock" compels a non-referential and allegorical reading, the two essays "Brazilian Beaches, Buenos Aires and Plaza Pakistan" and "Going Home" are unambiguously referential in their concern with 'public' issues. The latter, in particular, is literally about the author's visit to Pakistan after a period of twenty-eight years and his response [to] the political and social conditions of the country. (169)

It is true that the essays speak about socio-political realities. However, at the same time, the writer's imagination keeps the reader considerably away from immediate realistic concerns. They do not have the urgency of postcolonial studies' politics. This is not to

say, however, that Ghose's work, including his essays, completely evades the socio-political reality. But his concern with socio-political reality is not at the cost of language and style. More than just providing the information, the essays read like fantastic, well-crafted stories. A case in point is from the essay "Brazilian Beaches, Buenos Aires and Plaza Pakistan." Ghose, talking about the Brazilian beaches, states:

Here, one sinks into a dream of voluptuous longings. The mind abandons ideas and the body slips into that overwhelming passivity in which the only felt sensation is one of desire: but desire that must always remain short of consummation, for the act of attempting to achieve it is too laboriously encumbered by the expenditure of energy and it is more pleasurable to do nothing at all but remain nearly somnolent, half-dreaming of procrastinated passions. (*Beckett's Company* 21)

This is a wonderful depiction of the aesthetic pleasure that one can have by looking at a beautiful beach or an island. It also reflects Ghose's ideas on art: the creation of vivid imagery, which appeals to the human senses. In other words, the writer is being truthful to the reality he is depicting. Ghose is not merely reporting that the Brazilian beaches are beautiful; rather, the idea of beauty is presented in imaginative prose, and makes the reader aware of the writer's craft.

But why does Kanaganayakam emphasize the antithetical position of *Art* in relation to *The Triple Mirror*? The autobiographical and historical verifiability of the third section of the novel encourage this notion. Granted, the autobiographical and historical substance is there. At this stage, however, I briefly suggest that reading the third section in isolation would be to underestimate the narrative strategy and the totality of the work. The notion that form and content are separable is problematic. Mario Vargas Llosa suggests, "the separation of form and content (or theme and style and narrative structure) is artificial." He further argues that the separation is "admissible only when we

are explaining or analyzing them...”(25). Indeed in good novels “the story a novel tells is inseparable from the way it is told. This *way* is what determines whether the tale is believable or not...” (Vargas Llosa 25-6). And we shall see in the discussion of the novel, Ghose creates an illusion of reality and is successful in persuading the reader to believe it only because of the *way* he tells it.

Critics’ obsession with Ghose’s attempt to distance “himself from an authenticating South-Asian past” is a well known fact (Brouillette 105). In *Structures*, Kanaganayakam, for example, discusses *The Triple Mirror* under the title “Going Home.” And declares the novel “a much-needed homecoming” (176). The idea of homecoming resides in the autobiographical elements of the novel. This concern is reflected in Dasenbrock’s evaluation of the work as well. He states the “*The Triple Mirror of the Self* ... offers a close—if not exact—parallel to Ghose's own biographical trajectory, and the novel grows steadily more autobiographical in feel and more realistic in mode as it makes this journey backward in time” (785-786). Critics’ interpretive obsession as regards to Ghose’s attempt to distance himself from an “authenticating South Asian past,” as suggested by Brouillette, is indeed evident in the words like “Ghose's own biographical trajectory.” This sort of “interpretative obsession of [Ghose’s] readers and critics, [who are] schooled to expect a specific conjuncture of life and art ... forms a critical impasse” (Brouillette 105). This is an important observation. Indeed, when it comes to Ghose, there is “a critical impasse.”

“Beginning in the Amazon-basin rain-forest ... [the novel] steadily moves away, first to a university in Arizona, then to London, and then to Bombay [now Mumbai] and the Punjab, tracing backward the chronicle of the life of a man known in the Amazon as

Urim, in London as Shimmers, in the India of his youth as Roshan” (Dasenbrock 785-786). Dasenbrock rightly outlines the gist of the narrative. The novel comprises three parts: “The Burial of the Self,” “Voyager and Pilgrim,” and “Origins of the Self.” The first part is set in a fictional South American town called Suxavat. The idyllic life and other socio-political circumstances in this fictional town are narrated by, the narrator character, Urim. He has been a resident of this village for about some years, although we do not know for exactly how long. Urim paints the picture of the life there through vivid imagery, with an emphasis on precise details about each situation. This first section of the novel ends when people from the “Interior Ministry” come and demand that the village be vacated, for the ministry people are in search of gold. Upon the refusal of the inhabitants of Suxavat, the government machinery attacks the village and destroys it. Urim, along with a few others, survives, and leaves the town.

There is no doubt that the first section of the novel represents a fictional world. But the references to the real places and events raise some questions. Kanaganayakam argues that the novel offers a critique of the nationalist project in India. He highlights that even in the fictional world of Suxavat, one cannot miss “the subtext of politics, exile, and identity” (170). In order to support his argument he mentions what Urim says after the village is attacked by the gang. When the village is attacked, Urim thinks of General Dyer, who, as we know, ordered the killing of the innocent people in Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar. Urim tells us of the forceful use of power which resulted in the destruction of the village, and, as a consequence, Urim’s expulsion from the town:

... I was certain that there was no more a Suxavat in which I could live.... I stopped several times and listened with a more intense attention to the sounds of my environment. On one such occasion, there was a continuous firing of a succession of guns, producing in my mind the image of a crowd

of people forced into a small clearing and massacred. I could still see nothing, but a picture seemed to be lit up before my eyes of a crazed English general commanding his soldiers to shoot at a crowd trapped in a square, and I was about to pity myself for having begun to hallucinate when I remembered a name, General Dyer, and ... a terrible past had begun to heave out of that jungle's darkness, giving me the impression that I stood upon layers of centuries which were projecting fragmented mirror images of one another through cracks in the humus. (87)

The reference to the Jallianwalla Bagh, in Amritsar, incident is evident. But we should not separate the content from narrative structure. The phrase "mirror images" is an important one. It tells us that the Suxavat massacre is a mirror image of Amritsar massacre. Likewise, the Andes, in the first section, turns into the mirror image of The Hindu Kush, in the third section.

This passage appears toward the end of the first section. Urim is terrified and even confesses his cowardice. There are stylistic reasons which need to be discussed. First, the narrator is successfully using history, and thereby making connections with the sections that apparently look different and stand on their own. The passage suggests the forward movement of the novel. It provides the justification that the narrative will move forward. And, when the narrative moves to, in the final section, British India, the setting of the novel does not come as a surprise. This allusion to the Amritsar massacre should be taken in the same vein as other references to South Asia that appear in the first section.

A similar reference comes in the beginning of the novel. When describing his longing for Horuxtla, Urim thinks of "that moment of hallucination that possessed me as I lay in a cousin's house in Karachi after the flight from London when I awoke dripping in a darkened room and saw the figure of the girl, her hands held out with an offering, make a phantom appearance and elude me for nearly thirty years and finally stand before me in the person of Horuxtla" (11). Again, Kanaganayakam treats these lines, particularly

the reference to Karachi, for the argument that the fictional village talks about the realism and the autobiographical experience of the writer. Indeed, the reference to Karachi recalls Ghose's trip to Pakistan in 1962. In that year Ghose was there covering a cricket match for *The Observer*. All these assumptions are fundamentally correct. But it reflects a tendency that whenever a reference is made to any former British colonies such as India the discussion automatically slides into the realm of postcolonial politics of representation, authenticity, and identity. In other words, it becomes very easy to label a text as postcolonial. Of course, Ghose is using history and autobiographical experiences but not at the cost of style.

Urim is recalling his past experiences with Horuxtla. He is narrating it through memory. The style is quite conversational. Since he is telling it from his memory, a number of fragmented images come to his mind. Remembering Horuxtla, he recalls that he "gave her buttocks a casual pat" (10). But says "*No, not causal at all*" (10, Ghose's italics). And then the description turns into the vivid imagery of Urim's potent sexual intimacy with Horuxtla. The reader gets completely absorbed in it. He presents a believable account. But Urim shocks the reader when this passage, too, ends on "*No*" (11). Again, Urim negates this description, and says that it is a memory "prior to experience, its images constituted by the force of conceit while I stood in the museum in Baltimore in front the painting of a girl in Tahiti, a mango in her palm" (11). Then he says it was much earlier when he was lying in a cousin's house in Karachi. After this passage, the narrative shifts back to the precise description of Horuxtla. The whole episode is very interesting. It keeps the reader absorbed due to the imagery and contradictory claims about a particular incident. The references to Baltimore and Karachi

are important in terms of style, too. When the second section is set in the U.S. and the third, as already suggested, in South Asia, these references create a link, and these references provide a bridge between seemingly different and autonomous sections. There are other references as well, like Kathakali dance, Muhammad Ali Road, Madras etc (6). All this suggests that, at some point, the narrative will end in these places. So, the stylistic purpose of these verifiable settings should not be ignored.

Above all, the narration of the story from the character's memory is an important stylistic ploy. It makes sense that the first section appears fragmented. Thus, memory serves, as Nadia Butt suggests, "a schema of narration" (297). Memory as a narrative scheme suggests the imaginative aspect of the novel. Urim claims that his memory is "also the repository of fabulous fictions of the self" (75). So, there is a good deal of untruth in the reconstruction of the past through memory. It therefore can be a fictionalized version of reality. So, taking memory's version of certain historical events without bringing in the narrative structure is misleading.

In the above discussion, I make the argument that the verifiable names of places and cities fit into the narrative structure of the first section. Yet another important aspect of the narrative is the negation of nationalistic allegiance which is complemented by the narrative style. Toward the end of the first part, when Suxavat is being attacked by the gang, Urim does not do anything to save his country. He is, in fact, scared to see the killing. But his tone remains detached and gives the precise image of the destruction. He leaves the place and has no nationalistic feelings. The reader, however, is not surprised. It takes the reader back to the beginning of the novel. Suxavat village, as Urim tells us, is a country of less than two hundred people. It has no nationalistic allegiance. But "Brazil,

Peru and Colombia have professed a claim to the territory, raising obscure legal issues at The Hague concerning colonization and emancipation” (3). Urim’s tone suggests that he has no interest in the territorial and nationalistic questions pertaining to Suxavat. Adding to this, Urim is not a native of Suxavat. The natives of Suxavat named him “after the immigrant tree: Urimba, the scattered one” (3). Thus, Urim’s lack of interest in nationalistic associations is quite believable. Above all, if he had strong nationalistic associations and the desire to perform some heroic deed against the enemy might have led to his death—and then the narrative would have to be told by a ghost narrator. That would have been a stylistic flaw. Yet another reason for Urim’s lack of nationalistic association is the objective presentation of the reality in Suxavat. In the last section, Roshan has a similar detached view of the turbulent time at the time of partition. Therefore, through the precise depiction of Urim’s life in Suxavat, we get a truthful picture of the life there.

Thus, the writer is not glorifying the people of Suxavat. They are not portrayed as innocent. There is no paradise-like situation. In fact, there are ridiculous rituals, including ceremonies of a foreign priest called Nebbola. The bride ceremony, for instance, is highly satirical. Urim says, “The effect was rather like watching Japanese youths performing a rock concert with all the physical gestures of British or American pop stars or coming across on a sidewalk in Los Angeles tall, blue-eyed Americans in orange-coloured robes chanting the praises of Krishna, each group appropriating an alien tribal practice with a sincerity so genuine it is sad to behold” (16). Again, these references suggest the eventual international setting of the novel. But this also offers a critique of a culture desperately attempting to sound multicultural. This sort of appropriation of the native culture and

romanticism of it is reflected in Tambour's comment, who, when going to kill a jaguar, says, "I'll go native with a spear" (16). But Tambour does not go native out of so-called respect for the native culture. The reality about Tambour is revealed in a matter of time. In Xurupa, Urim meets Tambour. The latter fondly talks about Suxavat. But all Tambour is interested in is gold. He states to Urim: "For months there was only one thought in my mind—God, let me find gold, let me find gold!" (54).

The bloody politics and the capitalistic greed resulted in the destruction of the town. In terms of content, perhaps, the most important theme has not to do with the appearance of names of the places and cities in America and South Asia. More than the writer's own condition of exile and the South Asian roots, it is the transformation of Suxavat from a utopia to a dystopia at the hands of the capitalists. The whole section, in terms of content, reminds us of what W.H. New points out as "a continuing analysis of power: of its workings, and of its basis in the economics of ownership and desire" (358). The men who come from the "Interior Ministry" ask the people of Suxavat for relocation because they want to develop the land, for they argue that Suxavat has no value without development. As already mentioned, upon the refusal by the locals of Suxavat, they are destroyed.

This episode has two significant consequences. First, as Brouillette points, "such a collective past [of the people of Suxavat is] unnecessary to the kind of communally based opposition to global capitalism..." (108). This is true. However, the violence at the hands of the capitalists in Suxavat has a stylistic aspect as well. It creates the justification for Urim to leave the place. But that is not the only reason. The narrator's interest in Horuxtla who is a stunning beauty, an illusion, yet portrayed real, helps the narrator to

keep himself alive through the sordid reality of life. Horuxtla is a woman of elaborate charm, known for her stunning beauty. Urim is desperate to possess her. From the point of view of style, Urim's desire to possess is a logical reason to take him out of the world of Suxavat. However, Brouillette points out that Urim's "metaphors [about Horuxtla] are dominantly colonial, and he sees the girl as a land to be conquered, though he cannot bring himself to do it" (109). This suggests the larger image of land as a woman, which has been discussed in the chapter on the trilogy as well. But from the point of view of style, the image of Horuxtla serves as an objective correlative that drives the story forward.

In the second part of the novel, we come to know that Urim has been maintaining a document, the Urim manuscript. This manuscript is handed down to Jonathan Pons (an American academic) by a Latin American realist, Valentin Sadaba. Pons is surprised when he finds his name in the manuscript. He insists that he never knew anyone called Urim. But he is curious as to why his name appears there. Pons is bored with his teaching. Looking for some grant in which he would also get an opportunity to travel, he finds out that one is available for the completion of an unfinished work due to the "death of its author" (119). Finding it perfect for his project, he secures funding from a foundation in Nebraska to work on the manuscript. Thus, the narrative moves backwards to find out Urim's past life. Pons finds out that before going to South America Urim was Zinalco Shimomura, and he was a poet. But before coming to the US Shimomura lived in England. Their Shimomura used to be known as Shimmers.

Brouillette points out that "[i]t is never clear why Urim includes Jonathan Pons in his narrative, though it does make it more likely that the narrative would one day fall into

Pons's hands, and that it would therefore be subject to interpretive scrutiny" (109). She, however, does not elaborate on this point. The inclusion of Pons in the first section of the novel is important. Pons' inclusion in the Urim manuscript has a stylistic aspect to it. As mentioned earlier, Urim tells his story from his memory, and of course it is selective and fragmented. So, the reference to Pons in the first section of the novel is not without purpose. In the first section Urim remembers him as someone who has an anthropologist's zeal. Pons first appears in the chapter "The Mirrored Man." The title is suggestive. Urim meets him the first time in a nice hotel in Xurupa. He is enjoying the fruits of modern life. Urim remembers him later as someone who is "a hedonist rather than a scholar" (35). He has a pretentious talk. He states that "the only thing I miss in this country is my cat whom I named Socrates. Not after the great philosopher but after the Brazilian soccer star" (35). At this stage we do not know much about Pons. But the way he talks about his cat suggests that he is more into popular American cultural practice of giving animals interesting names. There is a bit of humor too. The point, however, is that the reader gets conscious about the character. So, in the second section Pons' appearance does not come as a surprise. We must see this reference in terms of other references to India, Karachi, etc. It prepares the reader for the eventual destinations of the narrative.

Brouillette suggests that "the Urim manuscript as a whole is a pastiche of Ghose's fictional tendencies, Jonathan Pons's treatment of it makes him a figure for Ghose's critical reception in general" (109). This is an interesting argument. It may be true that Urim's manuscript is a representative of "Ghose's fictional tendencies," but Pons' treatment of the script is much more than a reflection of "Ghose's critical reception." Pons is a caricature and a type of literature professor who likes to talk about anthropological

issues and identity politics. He never misses an opportunity to secure a grant, but never does any actual work. He is the one who enjoys a luxurious life, but idealizes exotic cultural practices. Pons' character, therefore, is important, for he represents a type of metropolitan scholar who sounds political, but is only interested in identity issues and not in the real suffering of the world, such as socio-economic subjugation. This is evident from the fact that Pons does not talk about the looting and the plundering of Suxavat, but he is only interested in the identity of the manuscript's author.

In the second section the narrator is Pons. Unlike the opening of the first part of the novel, this part opens in past tense. The choice of Pons as a narrator is an interesting one. The novel achieves its persuasive power in this section through Pons' own depiction of himself, all the while without really knowing that he has become a subject of merriment for the reader. The reader does not have to rely on extended retrospective passages to know about Pons. He depicts himself in his interaction with others, situations, and his involvement with the Urim manuscript. Initially, the reader is curious about the Urim manuscript and the identity of its author. But in a way the identity of the author of the manuscript becomes secondary, and what comes to the forefront is the critique of the academic environment in the U.S. Pons does not want us to see it this way; however, despite being a mediator between the Urim script and the reader, he fails to dictate how the text should be read. Thus, the reader becomes more interested in Pons and his academic environment than the identity of the Urim manuscript's author. The choice of Pons as a narrator character is also important because of his academic training. As an academic his interest in the identity issues works well with the narrative structure.

Now I come to Pons as a caricature of a scholar who never misses an opportunity for securing a grant but never does any work. He has achieved five grants in seven years. In his suite Pons spends his time reading the *New York Times*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Sports Illustrated*. He thinks reading these papers is “a perfect recipe ... for the strained and overworked research scholar abroad to recover his sense of balance...” (111). But he does not do any work. After seven months he contributes nothing to his research. He himself notes:

... seven months of intensive preoccupation with the object of my research, from which I took time off only twice, once to escape a cold spell by seeking a week’s refuge in Egypt, and on the second occasion going to see the early spring flowers on the banks of Lake Como, stopping in Milan on the way to take in an evening at La Scala ... I concluded that a book on the subject of the Italian cinema of the fifties and Browning’s poem, though it would be welcomed by scholars in the field of literature and popular culture, was not the work with which I preferred to make my debut as a critical scholar. It was just as well, I thought when I returned to California at the end of the summer after taking my holiday in Switzerland, which I needed in order to brace myself for the rigours of the upcoming teaching semester, that I had not transferred my mental notes to the laptop computer that I took everywhere, and therefore I had nothing in my writing with which to fall into the temptation of easily putting together a publishable book. (118)

This long quote perfectly sums up the second section. It offers a critique of certain types of academics in a capitalist society. Upon this sort of scholarship, he congratulates himself. He says: “I congratulated myself on the intellectual growth I had acquired during those twelve months, for, in retrospect, it seemed to have been a most fruitful time. There was nothing I had proved to myself absolutely: I knew what need *not* be done” (118, Ghose’s italics). It is humorous. As a professor of literature, he takes up research in which he can justify long distance travel. The purpose is of course not research, but to enjoy the life of nice hotels and exotic settings. But Pons looks serious, and insists that

“[t]his knowledge provided me with a fine sense of freedom.... I was a superior scholar for knowing what scholarship not to attempt.... I was struck by the panic that classes were to begin in another week. I realized that I needed to start thinking of a new project” (118). It is obvious that Pons does not want to be in the classroom. Therefore, he tries to rationalize the importance of his scholarship, and feels good about it. This reflects on how Pons decided to go for a research project in which he can get a chance to travel to far off places.

Pons begins his research by speculating that Sadaba might have written the script. Sadaba, as we know, is a realist. Since the manuscript contains geopolitical violence in South America, Pons assumes that only a realist can depict the violence. This is believable because of Pons’ academic training. But what is the critique in fact? It suggests that Pons cannot think that other than a realist anyone can represent harsh realities of life.

But somehow Pons rejects his assumption that Sadaba could be the author of the manuscript. Therefore, he comes up with another assumption that the manuscript is written by Zinalco Shimomura, a quiet gentlemanly figure, who joined the literature department of a state university in Arizona where Pons was also working as a professor of literature. Thus, the narrative shifts to Shimomura’s life. Pons gets a lead to Shimomura’s friends in England. From them Pons acquire some unpublished and published material. From “the English Notebooks” Pons learns that Shimomura was “an immigrant to England from South Asia” (124).

Pons contemplates how he was first told about Shimomura. Again, the whole situation speaks more about the academics in general than Shimomura. He was brought

into Pons' notice by Arthur Williams, another professor who does not do any significant work. Pons tells us, "Arthur's favorite subject for a corridor conversation was which one of our colleagues was the latest whose article had been rejected by which journal" (122). Williams is shocked by Shimomura's success and asks Pons "Didya know he published a sonnet in the *Atlantic Monthly* last year?" (122). Shimomura was a poet and therefore wasn't given much attention by Pons in the department, who dismissed him that Shimomura is only interested in fame by writing poetry. And also Pons got a job later in San Diego, and was happy that he got out of a provincial university in Arizona, and therefore never got a chance to know that man he "derisively named Zinlaco Shimomura" (123).

Perhaps the most important critique on the American academic environment comes in the chapter "Novella Isabella." This section highlights an expatriate academic, Isabel, who is Shimmers' wife. She is the type whom Aijaz Ahmad would call a representative of an expatriate "small academic elite," and the one who has "personal innocence" and "missionary zeal" (85). She is portrayed as an aggressive feminist. In fact, she is the subject of fun in "Novella Isabella" which reads like a novel in itself. Isabel acquires an instructorship in the university where Shimmers is also teaching. Then she decides to advance her academic career by changing the simple prose of her thesis into complex jargon: "By changing the ordinary language with its journalistic simplifications to the more complex prose, with its exquisitely obscure jargon, of her professional discipline she could, by adding also some diagrams and footnotes, publish the series of articles as one impressive contribution to the international study of sociology" (153). It follows a humorous depiction of the process of publication. We are

told that “it took her only a week to perform the necessary cosmetic surgery to her simple English prose. The resulting lengthy learned article was submitted to an eminent learned journal in the discipline. A committee of learned experts in the field pondered the article for four months and recommended its publication” (153).

One interesting critique comes from the fact that it is not only academic merit that helps advance one’s career but one’s public relations skills. How politically correct you are also matters. It appears that academics serve more as public servants than true scholars. “Academic merit, however, would not have advanced her career as rapidly as her charming habit of visiting the department’s politically active male professors and finding some common interest with each ... [, for] female colleagues found Isabel a champion of feminist rights” (153). She quickly learned the trendy discourse of the social scientists. She recasts her article in four different journals by adding more footnotes and minor changes. The university is impressed by her academic achievement. She becomes popular. She serves on “several committees and court[s] publicity by conspicuously participating in popular causes, such as demonstrating outside an abortion clinic, [which is] reported in the city paper and twice [receives] statewide media coverage” (154).

The reader may think that the construction of Isabel’s image is Pons’ demonization of an independent woman scholar. This stylistic issue is resolved through an objective description of Isabel’s friend’s visit from London. Isabel’s friend, Caro, after her visit to the former in The U.S., later recalls a social gathering at Isabel’s house. She recalls all the guests were “social scientists.... Friends of Isabel mainly. A terribly old-fashioned group, really. Male professors with wives devoted to advancing their careers. A rather provincial lot, if I may say so, with the worst bourgeois pretensions ... eager

females jealously guarding their husbands' careers and completely ignorant of any feminist principles" (157). This is a critique on the politics that surrounds the academic environment, which is no better than the professional politics of the much despised politicians.

Shimmers disappears and never sees his wife and child again. The question is why would he leave his wife and child? How does the writer offer a believable reality about the whole incident? Shimmers becomes annoyed with too much socio-political noise in his wife's head. This assertion is bolstered by the fact that Shimmers is not just a poet but often reads from pure artists: the ones for whom art is a way of life, a vocation. Flaubert is one of those artists. It is interesting, as Caro recalls, that Shimmers made a point about Flaubert that the latter had no interest in having children. Caro states, "I thought his [Shimmers] horror of children was only a literary pose. In our earlier talks he'd shown me passages from people, Flaubert I think was one, who rejected the idea of having children (155). This is a casual remark about Shimmers. But it is important in terms of style. So, when he disappears, the reader is not surprised that he has left his wife and child. Why would Caro, who shares a good deal with Isabel, let Shimmers get away with the comment on not having children? In reply to the comment, Caro complained, "That's all men ... what do *they* know? And then he [Shimmers] pulled out Virginia Woolf's diaries and thrust before me a page he'd marked. I was quite horrified to see what dear old Virginia had written. It's stuck in my brain ever since. Yes, even to have children would be useless, she's written" (155, Ghose's italics). Bringing in the reference to Virginia Woolf, Ghose highlights a problem in making generic statements pertaining to men or women.

The case of Pons and Williams is not to suggest that only the American academic establishment is subject to mockery. This sort of scholarship is not the problem of the U.S. academy; it is reflected in the so-called rhetoric of the scholars who claim to be original and champions of their cultures. Valentin Sadaba is a Latin-American realist who wants to come to the U.S. to talk about “the greed of British and Swiss bankers,” and he finds Pons “as a representative of the American intellectual establishment” which Pons claims he is not (115). Sadaba expresses all his disgust for European cunning. But Pons asks him a legitimate question: “So how is your *new* world going to be free of the old European strings, tell me that! The revolution you’re talking about is socialism, and don’t tell me *that* was invented in Lima!”(115). To this he accuses Pons of not understanding him. This is a typical gesture from a scholar who claims that a Western scholar cannot understand another culture. In fact, Sadaba is making things complex when they are not. Sadaba takes “on a martyred appearance, adopts a wounded voice and pretends to be resigned that he is misunderstood” (115). In short, in this section Pons provides a humorous account of the academic environment in and outside the US academy. As already suggested, in an effort to reveal the identity of Urim, Pons reveals his own and his fellow academicians’ true character. Above all, the content is tied in the narrative structure.

The third section is more talked about than the rest of the novel. It enjoys public presence more than its other two sections so to speak. Undoubtedly, this is true because of the identifiable setting, and that too, the 1940s Mumbai. In its objective portrayal of reality, Ghose deconstructs the simple binaries that the freedom struggles are neat and spotless, and that the colonizers should be blamed for everything. In fact, what he really

addresses is the human crisis at the time of partition. The decrepit structures of power in the form of religious discourse continue to afflict pain on human beings. In this regard, Ghose shares much in common with the writers of the vernacular languages who did not pay any attention to the politics of the colonizer; rather they highlight the problems confronted by the poor under the local elite.

Unlike the first two sections, there is a third person narrator in the third section of the novel. But we know it is Pons who is serving as the all-knowing narrator. Pons, as we know, is a realist. Thus, the seemingly realistic depiction of the circumstances in the turbulent decade of the 1940s in Mumbai justifies the role of Pons as being the narrator/writer of this section. Narrating in the third person, the narrator presents the details of everyday life with scrupulous objectivity. The writer paints a picture of the gloominess that was prevailing at the time of partition of the sub-continent. It is one of the most objective takes on the circumstances of religious and political bigotry coming to the fore during a charged up atmosphere. What makes this distinctive is that the novel is not about loyalties, and does not make Roshan take up sides. Roshan, as a teenager, is happy playing cricket, making love, reciting Byron, and attempting to write poetry to impress girls.

Set in British India, the third part deals with Roshan. Roshan, a Muslim boy, is growing up in metropolitan Mumbai among Hindus, Sikhs, and Parsees. He, along with his family, leaves the country after the partition when the whole environment is charged with religious and political fervor: the growing hatred between Muslims and non-Muslims—Hindus and Sikhs. It appears that it is drawn upon personal experiences

because Ghose lived in Mumbai at the time of the partition. Thus, autobiographical reality is there. But he transforms autobiographical reality into an imaginative text.

But one must admit, too, that the final section of the novel “Origins of the Self” leaves an impression on the mind that one cannot leave the partition history behind. Aamer Hussein states, “For all the lavish lyricism of Ghose’s prose, the harsh realism of history prevails”(20). Partition was a great trauma. Anti-Muslim violence at the time of the partition in the predominantly Hindu Mumbai was commonplace. Likewise, this is also to mention that anti Hindu riots were common in predominantly Muslim cities. Neighbors killed each other’s children. They became strangers to each other. Social events and the routine gatherings became tense among friends of different faiths. This is something also highlighted in the short stories of the famous Urdu writer Saadat Hassan Manto. This estrangement is visible between Chandru and Roshan in the novel. The religious presence between them is hardly invisible. Not that the two wanted to have it between them, but they are being pressured by the society and the politics of the time.

The politics of the time is effectively revealed through the beauty of style. It makes it more forceful and persuasive. The reader cannot define the sensation it creates. A case in point is as follows. The time of the independence coincides with Roshan’s hospitalization. In the clinic bed he remembers the image of a woman: “Long years ago when the living heart was plucked out of my body and I watched the women kneeling beside Gandhi’s bed and saw the hour had come when he must break his fast for the woman who held the glass in her hand had begun to raise it to his lips. Drink, father, my blood” (322). This is heart rending. But how does Ghose make it forceful? He foregrounds the image against Mr. Nehru’s independence speech that is being relayed on the

radio: “Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny...” (322). Look at the same beginning of both these sentences, “long years ago.” It is wonderful. The beginning of the two sentences is the same, but they reflect two contradictory emotions: sadness and victory. The first one is full of sadness. The second one is high-sounding and hopeful, a sense of victory. The promise of independence is glorified and undermined at the same time. In short, through his style, the writer is completely successful in conveying the impact of the tragedy of the time.

We know why Gandhi was fasting after the partition because of what was going on in the newly born independent India—the communal violence was heart-breaking. It was shameful. The partition affected the people very deeply. Even to those who stood for progressive ideas rather than succumbing to a religious ideology. Ali recalls an interesting incident regarding his mother which is worth quoting:

My mother ... an active member of the Communist party at the time and proud of her correspondence with Jawaharlal Nehru, would often recall how in April 1947, heavily pregnant with my sister and alone at home, she was disturbed by a loud knock on the front floor. As she opened the door, she was overcome by panic. She thought she was about to be murdered. In front of her stood the giant figure of a Sikh. He saw the fear on her face, understood and spoke to her in a soft, reassuring voice. All he wanted was the location of a particular house on a nearby road. My mother gave him the directions. He thanked her warmly and left. She was overpowered by shame. How could she of all people, without a trace of communal prejudice, have reacted in that fashion? She was not alone. (37)

As suggested above, the partition even affected those who did not believe in religious divides. But the circumstances were such that genuine progressive writers such as Quratul Ain Haider, the poet Sahir Ludhianvi, Manto, and the list goes on, had to leave. In the later years, finding themselves uncomfortable in Pakistan, some of them returned back to India. But Manto did not return.

Manto transferred the trauma of partition into great, imaginative literature. The reflection of the sadness of an artist who did not take up any sides is best reflected when Manto wrote some years after the partition:

My heart is heavy with grief today. A strange listlessness has enveloped me. More than four years ago when I said farewell to my other home, Bombay, I experienced the same kind of sadness. There was a strange listlessness in the air much like that created by the forlorn cries of kites flying purposelessly in the skies of early summer. Even the slogans of “Long Live Pakistan” and “Long Live Quaid-e-Azam” fell on the ear with a melancholy thud. (qtd. in Ali 38)

The reader cannot help feel the pain Manto was feeling. Isn't it the pain of an exile? Yes, it is. Isn't it a bitter condition than the so-called condition of voluntary exile in the metropolis in the West? I need not compare. I will only recall the sentence that I quoted earlier, “long years ago.”

The events of the partition deeply affected poets, fictions writers, and other artists. For most writers, the time of independence was not the time of celebration: the communal carnage haunted them throughout their remaining lives. Ahmad rightly mentions that:

Our nationalism at this juncture was a nationalism of mourning, a form of valediction, for what we witnessed was not just the British policy of divide and rule, which surely was there, but our own willingness to break up our civilizational unity, to kill our neighbours, to forgo that civic ethos, that moral bond with each other, without which human community is impossible. A critique of others (anti-colonial nationalism) receded even further into the background, entirely overtaken now by an even harsher critique of ourselves. The major fictions of the 1950s and 1960s—the shorter fiction of Manto, Bedi, Intezar Hussein; the novels of Quratul Ain, Khadija Mastoor, Abdullah Hussein—came out of that refusal to forgive what we ourselves had done and were still doing, in one way or another, to our own polity. (*In Theory* 119).

Nothing can be truer than what Ahmad expresses in the above passage. Because of what we did to ourselves, and continue to do so, writers, the good ones, took a detached view

of the mindless violence. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956) and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* (1988) have beautifully captured the human tragedy of the partition without succumbing to their respective state propaganda. Among Urdu writers, Manto, "took a detached view of the killings.... He took no sides. He wrote with a passionate detachment, depicting the summer of 1947 as a state of utter madness" (Ali 37). We notice this sort of detachment both in part one and part three of *The Triple Mirror*.

Although there is a lot of autobiographical matter in the novel, it ceases to be a straight realistic section of the novel. The writer assembles the novel in such a way that he balances the imaginative and historically verifiable events. As Ghose states, "the only certain reality is that which is known to be an appearance, something made up to serve a theory of aesthetics which in itself is an illusory puzzle obliging humans to argue the infinite ways in which it may sensibly be assembled" (*Art* 21). There are a number of examples from the third section. It is important to note, for instance, in the final chapter of the novel, "But you," Ghose brings in Ghalib, a great Urdu poet. There is this vivid depiction of a poetry reciting moment at the wedding. He is not doing it as a sermon, but he creates a situation in which this minor character, Usman, has to read poetry. The following description is worth noting:

Usman gives a performance of being reluctant but soon recites a dozen verses. Sitting cross-legged, a hand raised to his head with the thumb stuck into his ear and his eyes closed, he declaims the verses in such pure Urdu you stop breathing.... Usman recites verses about moths and flames and breezes that touch the petals of a perfect rose. (338-39)

This vivid image of someone reading good Urdu poetry appeals to the senses. One can see the moment. The situation that the writer describes is not unreal, but the subject

matter itself highlights the importance of the quality of language. It is also interesting that few lines later, when the reality of the situation becomes known, the grandfather does not have any land and as a result the marriage is called off, leading to an exchange of the foulest language in Punjabi. The beautiful moment of the marriage ceremony is complemented by Ghalib's poetry. But when the marriage is called off, the foulest words in Punjabi highlight the intensity of the quarrel. Through this the narrative gets its power.

The quarrel over the marriage creates a justification to drive the narrative toward the Hindu Kush. When the marriage is called off, Roshan's father feels insulted, and goes to the Hindu Kush, away from his relatives to soothe his mind. The whole narrative moves away from the immediate socio-political reality. What happens when Roshan looks at the Hindu Kush? It is told in the one long final sentence. The final sentence is bit long, but worth quoting, for it represents the overall structure of the novel. It reads:

But you looking at the Hindu Kush or at your father's dream of it aware of the unbearable beauty of white snow on white ice reinventing your father among glittering peaks so as not to suffer alone in your afterlife the curse of your beginning no longer not yet 7 but all the ages you must be before your body becomes a drop of moisture frozen in one of the tiny cracks in the ice alone in this land of origins this crunched up vertically thrusting land of suggestive distortions in exile even in your first moment from which there is never an emancipation could you come to an inch of the wall of ice and crack its surface like a geologist certain there must be an important fossil in the rock-face that crucial missing link deposited in the ice smashing wildly and shouting in the unechoing ice-bound valleys But you But you But you (343)

It is interesting that there is no punctuation at the end. The novel starts with "I" and ends with "you." The Hindu Kush, as suggested earlier, is a mirror image of the Andes. Thus, it takes the reader back to the first section of the novel. In terms of content, the sentence defeats Pons' effort to find the true self of Urim. His effort is like a geologist who is finding the missing link in the examination of fossil, but essentially, he never gets past

the stage of hammering which is the importance of "But you But you But you." This is why perhaps there is no full stop at the end. So the attempt to find one's true identity is a futile exercise. Thus, the ending of the novel completely takes away the realism of the third section. At the end the reader feels that the whole story is perhaps a journey from "I" of the first sentence to the "you" of the final sentence. But, indeed, there is so much subject matter between "I" and "you."

Throughout this chapter, I have been trying to suggest that the three sections of the novel resonate with each other through style. This assumption is testified further when we raise the question about the relationship between Urim, Shimmers, and Roshan. Apparently, they are all different names indicating "light." In Sanskrit and Urdu, Roshan is a reference to light. Shimmers also refers to light. But what about Urim? As Urim himself explains in the beginning, the people of Suxavat gave him this name after the 'Urimbola'. But if we try to find out Urimbola in the botanical dictionary, the tree does not exist. The writer makes it up. Why? He does this to make a connection with Shimmers and Roshan. Urim in Hebrew means light. So, the novel's narrative structure, no matter how fragmented it looks due to its international setting, is unified as one streak of light. Therefore, despite "the harsh realism of history," the lyricism of its prose and the beauty of narrative structure prevail in the novel.

Conclusion

In this study, I have focused on the author's struggle with finding style to deal with his provocative subject matter. With the exception of his first two novels, *The Contradictions* and *The Murder of Aziz Khan*, Ghose's negotiation with style and content is effective, and manifests itself a distinctive aspect of his writing.

Ghose is not a political writer in the usual sense. In other words, politics is not his main concern; it is a by-product. But in his effort to create his own style, he produced a body of work which addresses the issues of exploitation, cruelty, and subjugation in this world. This historical reality is not country specific only, but also presents the human condition in general. In his experimentation with form, he highlights exploitation in its most blatant and subtle ways; and challenges authority wielded by both conventional and non conventional sources.

Despite having relevancy to the contemporary world, in terms of content, Ghose's work is overlooked both in his native land and abroad. I believe that the neglect of his work by the majority of South Asian Anglophone critics and literary historians is due to the perceived lack of forcefulness, in his work, against the colonizers. I say this because, for different reasons, it is hard to avoid nationalistic discourse out of the critical practice. And Ghose's works can be anything but nationalistic. So, Ghose is not an interesting prospect for the purists, "nativists," and flag-waving nationalists. Similarly, he resists the identity politics which is so popular in the metropolitan academy. In other words, his corpus resists the official discourse of postcolonial studies, which is dominated by identity and nationalistic politics. Ghose is concerned with neither nationalism nor

identity, roots, and multiculturalism. Ghose is not a social commentator. His work appears independent of liberal or conservative politics.

Ghose's development as a writer from straight realism to the artifacts of language and the irrelevance of physical and geographical belonging is a very distinguished aspect of his writing. Ghose's preoccupation with form is a conscious one. He remains a free artist who creates his art, and is not beholden to any fashionable political agenda. That is why he opts to become a part of the views of the gurus of English literature than be a part of any cultural, political, and or identity politics. Although he could easily become a champion of cultural identity that informs much of the so-called Third World Literature, he always tried to emulate gurus of Western literature. His struggle is, as suggested earlier, with the creation of an original style.

In this study, I agree with and endorse Kanaganayakam's argument that reading Ghose through form is necessary. However, I do not agree with the view that Ghose's experimentation with form is to explore his 'native-alien experience.' As a matter of fact, the issues of exile and belonging do not correspond well with Ghose, especially after 1965. It is true that there are preoccupations with exile in his autobiography, which was published when Ghose was only thirty years old. But later in his career, Ghose works out the dilemma of exile and belonging through a realization that it is useless to lament over one's condition as an alien; he finds his home in art rather than succumbing to certain nationalistic and geographical allegiances. Moreover, this sort of resistance to nationalistic and geographical loyalties is not a new thing. It is found in the lives and poetry of Punjabi poets of the subcontinent: the poetry of Bulleh Shah, Waris Shah, Kabir, and the list goes on as a testimony to this. In their poetry *fakir* acquires a metaphor

for resisting the temptation of capitalistic greed and nationalistic madness. And, Ghose, though he cannot read or write Punjabi, grew up in a Punjabi household, and is an enthusiastic admirer of Punjabi Sufi music.

Therefore, Ghose's preoccupation with form, which may give the impression of complicity with the political domination of western capitalistic structures, because of his seemingly arrogant indifference (in his critical work) to the depiction of the societal problems, is not true. Moreover, this is evident from his creative work, which challenges all sorts of domination, coercion, and exploitation. I admit, albeit, Ghose would not like us to focus on his subject matter.

Consequently, in this study of his novels, I have analyzed his work in terms of its achievements—achievements in form and content, and revealing the correspondence between style and strong socio-political subject matter. On the whole, I have tried to create a balance between Ghose's radical stance on form and the issues of exploitation and authority that his works conclusively reveal. The chapters of this dissertation resonate with each other to establish a link, and trace Ghose's evolution as a writer.

In this study, I have sought to provide a fundamental understanding of his work, primarily for South Asian students, and particularly in Pakistan where he has been recently included in syllabi and courses. While taking up his novels, I have in my mind a particular audience. Therefore, I have tried to avoid over theorization and the more fashionable but indecipherable jargon of a certain type of critical theory. I believe that reading a writer through style is important for students, particularly international students, for it helps the students to learn the nuances of the language through good

literature. I hope that this study will help provide an introductory understanding, purely from literary criteria, to Ghose's art in general and his novels in particular.

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