

**BETWEEN THE NOTES: SEARCHING FOR VOICE IN PAUL SCOTT'S LATE
NOVELS**

Submitted by Ruth Pinder to the University of Exeter as a dissertation for the
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is about searching for a moral voice in Paul Scott's late novels of the *Raj*. Using his key vocal-narrative device, that of the stranger, it emphasizes the importance of sound and listening as clues to his contradictory reputation: an imperialist manque according to some scholars; one of his generation's most astute critics of imperialism to others.

It takes three settings and the social practices his fictional protagonists brought to life around them that helped to sustain and question imperial rule in India: first creating records, second performing family duties, and thirdly, cultivating one's garden. Listening to Scott's dialogue between inner and outer voice reveals the doubts, conflicts and compromises that reflected the ambiguities of everyday human experience of 'the situation', his sharp critique of the racism and snobbery that kept Indians at a distance, how authority was subverted or adhered to, responsibility affirmed or ignored.

Yet his bleakness is tempered by a respect for human dignity and the desire to reach across to those whom we call 'strangers'. A critical reflexivity is at stake, arguably an analytical strength not a methodological weakness. Whilst there are no certainties and few answers in Scott's work, my close-grained critical approach reveals that he had a tougher moral stance on Britain's imperial legacy than often assumed. It is precisely the stranger's presence that keeps Scott's moral voice alive, responding to Paul Gilroy's call to 'work through' Britain's loss of imperial prestige in less febrile and polarised ways.

The dissertation shows that Scott's most urgent truths are to be found in those momentary silences between the notes, between understanding and critique, social justice and tyranny, a reformist liberalism and a paternalistic imperialism. Whilst we may not like ambivalence, we might learn to work more productively with it.

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ABBREVIATIONS

JC: Jewel in the Crown

DSc: Day of the Scorpion

TS: Towers of Silence

DS: Division of the Spoils

SO: Staying On

MAM: Paul Scott: My Appointment with the Muse: Essays and Lectures

What happens on the growing edges of life is seldom written down at the time. It is lived from day to day in talk, in scraps of comment on the margins of someone else's manuscript, in words spoken on a street corner, or in cadences which lie well below the words that are spoken. Later it lives on, reshaped and re-interpreted in the memories of those who were part of it and finally slips, like a child's leaf boats after a long journey down a stream, into the unrecognizing hands of one's spiritual descendants who do not know the source of the water-soaked treasures which have landed on the shores of their lives. In any generation there may be a group of people who find meaning in just these unrecorded parts of life, who can read a book the better for knowing what the author meant to write while writing something else.¹

¹ Margaret Mead, *An Anthropologist at Work: The Writings of Ruth Benedict*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), p. xv.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine, Paul Scott urges the reader, the figure of:

Parvati, Daphne Manners' mixed- race child, waving to a stranger as she goes from the MacGregor House garden to her singing lessons.² In time, she hopes to introduce raga³ with all its complex half and quarter tones that are often alien to Western ears to the major concert halls of Europe.⁴ Daphne once described the resonance raga held for her thus:

Behind all the chatter and violence of India – what a deep lingering silence – Even their music is silence. It's the only music I know that sounds conscious of breaking silence, of going back into it when it's finished as if to prove that every man-made sound is an illusion.⁵

This is perhaps an unusual point from which to begin the search for a valid voice in Scott's late novels. Normally critics begin with the image of Daphne running soundlessly from - we know not what - the image that is central to the whole *Quartet* and, in part, its sequel, *Staying On*. However, images are not just pictures-in-the-head. They are also auditory and kinaesthetic. So, the reference to Parvati appealed to me as it echoed my interest in voice and its systematic erasure across major academic disciplines in the late twentieth century.

To discover, then, that critics found Scott's voice ambivalent – too loud in its defence of Empire for some, not loud enough for others - became the focal point of this dissertation.⁶ Ambivalence is hard to bear. My first instinct was to quash it. Yet the sound of Scott's voice penetrates his novels, from Hari Kumar's clipped public schools' accent, Daphne's galumphing feet, to Barbie Batchelor's despairing cry 'Is God deaf?' They formed part of Scott's search for a moral stance in literary form that rang true to the experience of people caught up in the dissolution of the British *Raj* in ways not necessarily of their own making, symbolic perhaps of Britain's own equivocation towards granting Indian independence.⁷ But the critique was

² The name Parvati symbolises 'the unity of all opposites', 'the ultimate goal of life' according to Mark Tully, *India's Unending Journey: Finding a Balance in a Time of Change*. (London: Rider, 2007), pp.162-165.

³ That Scott had more than a passing interest in music has largely escaped attention. Mine is not a musicological analysis, but I'd like to give that side of his voice its due.

⁴ The term raga comes from Sanskrit, meaning colour or passion. 'It refers to certain melodic shapes, involving specific intervals of the scale to produce a continuity of experience and 'colour' the mind'. It has no equivalent in classical European music. <https://www.britannica.com/cont/raga>. Downloaded 20.6.2018.

⁵ JC: 468.

⁶ Benita Parry. 'Paul Scott's *Raj*'. *South Asian Review*. 8(4), July/October 1975, pp.359-369. Other citations follow.

⁷ (a) I have sometimes used the terms 'moral' and 'ethical' interchangeably, though I share Pat Caplan's distinction: morality has a wider resonance, whilst ethics are used today principally to refer

troubling. It deserved another hearing. So, let me expand on the question of authorial voice and Scott's use of multi-vocality, particularly the figure of the stranger as his key vocal-narrative device.

The Authorial Voice:

By any reckoning voice is a slippery concept. Like the term image, it is a metaphor hovering between inner and outer self, between self, text and unknown reader. But as Mladen Dolar argues what makes voice distinctive is its inner relationship with meaning. 'The voice is something which points *towards* meaning' (my italics).⁸ It is not meaning *sui generis*. Since voice has once more been despatched to the mortuary, few critics have been prepared to re-visit it. Yet its presence is stubbornly persistent: even its most ardent critics cannot avoid it, much to their annoyance.⁹ Moreover, some ethnographers claim that it is 'the animus of writing, the manifestation of an author's will and feeling'.¹⁰ In fact, the notion of a marginal or repressed voice is at the heart of post-colonial criticism. Their texts cannot breathe otherwise.

But to focus on it means writing against the visual grain of most critical literature on Scott, if not 'Western' epistemology generally. To jettison sight and space would of course be absurd. We need the textual record too. Rather by foregrounding voice in all its immediacy and ephemerality I hope firstly to approach the significance of sound and listening for Scott's treatment of the *Raj* as a moral quality to show how the humanistic values of dignity, integrity and altruism were animated but often perverted by his fictional characters in practice. This leads into the second strand in my thesis, namely the way he uses vocal/written strategies in his text, particularly that of the stranger, to bring that moral voice in characterization, plot and setting to life.

Vocal/Narrative strategies, Multi-vocality and the Ethnographic Stranger

To confront Scott's mature work is to encounter a chorus of voices, with his characters busy declaiming, persuading, justifying, grumbling, whispering, shouting, mocking and gesturing. Yet their spoken dialogue is full of elisions, evasions, half-truths and silences. For example, there are passages in the text where a character's voice becomes 'the' voice, that makes the question of identifying who is doing the talking equivocal as we shall see. Nor are their voices

to codes of behaviour. Pat Caplan. *Ethics of Anthropology: Debates and Dilemmas*. (New York: Routledge, 2003), Introduction.

(b) The Atlantic Charter 1941, for example, drawn up to respect the rights of people to choose their own government, did not apply to Indians. In Francine S. Weinbaum, *Paul Scott: A Critical Study*. (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1992) p.110.

⁸ Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing Else*. (Cambridge Mass: M.I.T. Press, 2006), p.14.

⁹ Darsie Bowden, *The Mythology of Voice*. (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1999) pp. viii and 3.

¹⁰ Kathy Charmaz and Robert Mitchell, 'The Myth of Silent Authorship: Self, Substance and Style in Ethnographic Writing', *Symbolic Interaction*, 19(4), 1996, p.285.

necessarily consistent. They keep changing, silent over long stretches of time only to re-appear at unexpected intervals in the texts, troubling the boundaries between fact and fiction and unsettling the realist account I had initially expected. Moreover, they poach from one another, borrowing a phrase and making it their own often without acknowledgement. Which voices belong to Scott?

Then, buried in the text, I found a figure that related to my own world of anthropology, namely Scott's use of the stranger or traveller, a 'hidden narrative device' that moves between his letters, lectures and novels, just as an anthropologist moves from the voices attended to in 'the field', the mandatory field notes, to the written monograph for academic audiences.

As Scott wrote in one of his holographs,

The Stranger; the traveller; the writer ... there I am. The person telling the story, recreating at this point, that point.¹¹

Yet he was not entirely consistent himself noting in capitals at the back of his lecture series: 'THE WRITER IS NOT PRECISELY ME. SO THAT I MANAGE TO ACHIEVE DETACHMENT AND INVOLVEMENT'.¹² In a letter to Francine Weinbaum, one of the major psychoanalytical interpreters of his work, he elaborated 'There's always in the novel that invisible character, the person who's writing the book, the man (sic) who has to be convinced that it all happened, and convinces you because he tells you it does'.¹³ And finally, to his American students at Tulsa he reflected that 'The voice is what he/the author/begins and ends with ... It is a mystery. A quality of mind'.¹⁴

Such a figure resonates with the work of any ethnographer as it also involves estranging oneself from one's familiar environment to sharpen the differences between 'experience-near and experience-distant understandings of what is being said and done' as Clifford Geertz puts it.¹⁵ In fact, what matters most may not be spoken about at all. Like Scott's stranger, the ethnographer – whose presence is often unrequested - travels round collecting material, sifting through different accounts, trying to apprehend shifting meanings from 'the native's point of view', an influential ethical and political stance within the discipline that was developed – albeit imperfectly – by Bronislaw Malinowski in the Trobriand Islands during the

¹¹ In Janis Haswell, op cit. p.130.

¹² Shelley Reece, (ed), *Paul Scott: My Appointment with the Muse: Essays and Lectures 1961-1975*. (London: Heinemann 1986), p.52 and p.167. (In future, referred to as *MAM*).

¹³ Paul Scott letter to Francine Weinbaum, Nov. 19th 1974. In Haswell, (2002) op. cit., p.124.

¹⁴ *MAM*, p.167.

¹⁵ Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge*. (London: Fontana Press, 1983), p.57.

1920's. It has informed the kind of interpretative ethnographic approach in which I've primarily worked.¹⁶

However, the ethnographic stranger who 'comes today and stays tomorrow' also occupies an ambiguous presence.¹⁷ Precisely because of the ability to move around, to eaves-drop on conversations not meant to be heard, that voice cannot necessarily be trusted. Scott presented just such a dilemma when he stayed at Timmapuram, the village home of his ex-havildar, 'Naranja' Dass in 1965. Like the best ethnographers' experiences, this one proved salutary for his writing.

Of course, no voice exists in a vacuum. What can and cannot be said is intimately related to the actions and interactions between people that make up a 'Situation'. Which brings me to the three main settings and the social practices that Scott's fictional protagonists brought to life around them that helped legitimate the work of the *Raj*, shaping whose voices carried weight and whose did not: firstly 'Recording the Record, Interrogating the Interrogation'; secondly 'Performing Family Duties'; and thirdly 'Cultivating one's Garden'. Like Scott's own approach, these are not in strict chronological order and can be read independently of one another. But they speak to a common theme: the need to confront once again the moral responsibility of those caught up in Britain's civilising mission and ultimate dissolution of the *Raj*, a question that obsessed Scott for much of his writing career. As I will show, each setting had stories of its own to tell that challenge the simplistic binaries of 'good guys, bad guys' of structuralist studies on imperialism,¹⁸ and place Scott firmly on the cusp between the earlier realist British writers on India, such as Rudyard Kipling and George Orwell and modernist or postmodernist writers such as Salman Rushdie.¹⁹

In fact listening to Scott through his text gives us a much tougher moral expose of imperialism and the dissolution of empire than often thought and does much to counteract his reputation as 'insurmountably ambivalent (my emphasis)'.²⁰ For me his mature works present a subtle analysis of the way in which Scott's take on aspects of the *Raj* are shaped by what Peter Boxall calls a 'progenitive voice' or a coming- into-being through action and interaction.²¹ A critical reflexivity is at stake

¹⁶ Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1967). See John Van Maanen (*Tales From the Field: On Writing Ethnography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) for a discussion of the many different forms ethnography has taken since Malinowski wrote. It is not one thing.

¹⁷ Georg Simmel, (1950). 'The Stranger'. In *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*. Donald N. Levine, (ed). (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971) p.143. He might have added 'but always remains elsewhere' to his definition.

¹⁸ See Ania Loomba. *Colonialism/Post-Colonialism*, 2nd edition, (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p.194.

¹⁹ Jacqueline Bannerjee, *Paul Scott*. (Plymouth: Northcote House Publishers, 1999).

²⁰ Personal communication, Dr. Ayesha Mukherjee.

²¹ Peter Boxall, *The Value of the Novel*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

here. Scott deliberately invited a moral dialogue between writer and reader so that readers could respond discerningly to the lives and situations he portrayed, thereby unsettling the absolutism of any single account. But this does not mean he has no moral voice at all. It is precisely the stranger's presence that keeps Scott's moral voice alive.

Linking the two strands together, then, - a reading that valorizes sound and listening - is the perch from which I'll engage with Scott's later work. Scott's most urgent truths, this dissertation argues, are to be found in those momentary pauses between the notes that take readers as close as possible to understanding that 'deep lingering silence' that Daphne speaks so movingly about in my opening paragraph. And understanding his search for a voice is not just vaguely relevant for the contemporary reader. It provides an indispensable guide to today's troubles, addressing Paul Gilroy's contention that since 1945 the British have been unable 'even to face, never mind actually mourn the profound change in circumstances and moods that followed the end of the Empire and consequent loss of imperial prestige.'²² Attending to it in a less febrile and polarised way demands a deep listening from the reader.

One important note. Although Scott's obsession with India permeated his earlier novels, his most stinging rebuke is found in the four books that comprise the *Raj Quartet*, namely *The Jewel in the Crown*,²³ *The Day of the Scorpion*,²⁴ *The Towers of Silence*,²⁵ *A Division of the Spoils*,²⁶ and its continuation in the final volume, *Staying On*,²⁷ an overview of which can be found in Appendix 1. I am therefore concentrating largely on these texts, together with his lectures/essays, and an edited collection of his correspondence by Haswell which has only recently become available.²⁸ Of course, the latter cannot be treated as infallible guides to Scott's intentions, but they offer an intriguing accompaniment to his novels and taken together, invite the reader to come as close as possible to apprehending Scott's moral stance. Finally, as my earlier Literature dissertation was on George Orwell, I will also refer to his work more than usual, not least because Orwell's reputation has been the subject of similar criticisms to those of Scott, although this cannot be taken as a comparative study.

²² Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture*. (London: Francis Taylor/ Routledge, 2004), p.98.

²³ Paul Scott, *The Jewel in the Crown*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1966; reprinted London: Panther Books 1983).

²⁴ Paul Scott, *The Day of the Scorpion*. (London: Panther Books, 1968, reprinted 1983).

²⁵ Paul Scott, *The Towers of Silence*. (London: Panther Books, 1971, reprinted 1983).

²⁶ Paul Scott, *A Division of the Spoils*. (London: Panther Books, 1975, reprinted 1983).

²⁷ Paul Scott, *Staying On*. (London: William Heinemann, 1977).

²⁸ Janis Haswell, *Behind Paul Scott's 'Raj Quartet': A Life in Letters. 1: The Early Years (1940-1965); II: The Quartet and Beyond (1965-1978)*, (Amherst, New York: Cambria Press, 2011).

Puzzles and Aims

To recapitulate: my puzzles then are three-fold. First, why is Scott's authorial voice difficult to pin down in his mature novels? If that is the case, how is it that some critics hear only the sound of *Raj* revisionism,²⁹ squeamishness,³⁰ even narcissism in his work rather than the dissent he intended at the time? Secondly how can the apparent ambivalence towards voice in a work such as this be reconciled with terms such as empowerment or self-transformation, values that Scott was certainly attuned to and which are part of the struggle for voice in post-colonial literature? Thirdly, if the author is dead, how is the reader supposed to have an ethical relationship to anything, let alone Scott's fictional representation of the complex mix of colonial brutality, evangelism and affection that he felt characterised Britain's legacy in India?

The following broad aims will help me unravel these interlocking strands. Firstly, I want to explore the sense in which Scott was a moral writer, including his take on the possibilities for freedom of choice under conditions of oppression and his fictional characters' moral responsibility for Britain's imperial legacy in India. How audible is that moral voice in today's febrile climate and what, if any, sympathy might today's readers have for ordinary English people living a lie that was only partly of their own making? Secondly, I'll ask how linking the importance of sound and listening in his work with the role of the stranger – both neglected dimensions in the critical literature - might bring Scott's moral voice alive; and thirdly I'll explore how his work engages with contemporary debates on post-imperial nostalgia and melancholy articulated so urgently by Paul Gilroy.

Specific research questions focus on the vocal/narrative strategies he used in which the figure of the stranger – and the ethnographic stranger - is paramount. I'll also ask whose voices in the text Scott makes alliances with and what the implications for a critical evocation of British-Indian encounters might be. Lastly, there is the all-important question of how Scott has been treated by critics.

Finally let me turn to the way in which the dissertation has been organised:

Organisation of Dissertation

Using the vocal narrative instrument of the ethnographic stranger, each chapter explores Scott's search for a moral stance through his fictional characters' everyday predicaments that also speak to wider public issues. But each one approaches this search drawing on different tropes that helped to legitimate – and ultimately undermine – his protagonists' emerging attitude to imperial rule.

²⁹ Salman Rushdie, 'Outside the Whale', *Granta*, vol. 11, pp. 125-138, 1984.

³⁰ Benita Parry, (1975), op. cit., pp.359-369.

Chapter 2, 'Recording the Record, Interrogating the Interrogation' plunges us straight into the heart of the controversy over authorial voice. It explores the possibilities and limits of resistance first, under conditions of extreme duress, namely the interrogation, detention and torture of Hari Kumar by Ronald Merrick in Kandipat jail and two senior officials, Nigel Rowan and 'Mr.' Gopal; and secondly through Daphne Manners' diary written just before her death in which she offers a reflective critique of her own part in the tragedy that followed. Their respective accounts show how records are constantly being fashioned and re-fashioned, what is allowed, what silenced. They simultaneously parody what is supposed to be Britain's most enduring legacy in India, the administration of the rule of law, and uphold the dignity of the human subject.

Chapter 3, 'Performing Family Duties' continues the search for Scott's moral stance in terms of another familiar trope, that of '*ma-bap*' - 'I am your Mother and your Father' - and how it was variously fashioned in practice by his fictional protagonists. We explore Sarah Layton's efforts to apprehend the wounded Merrick's account of his attempt to save Teddie Bingham from the Japanese. The second part deals with the sacrifice of her friend, Ahmed Kasim as he jumps from the train to be massacred by Hindu separatists. Both accounts problematise the notion of duty as being necessarily condescending, archaic, or blindly compliant. In testing the limits of its conventions, I'll explore how Scott's protagonists could never predict how it would be interpreted in practice. Hence the difficulties of reaching a definitive moral judgement about his characters' responsibility for sustaining or resisting regimes of oppression in everyday action and interaction with others.

Chapter 4, 'Cultivating One's Garden' returns full circle to the symbolic relationship between the everyday care his protagonists lavished on their own gardens against that other notorious garden, the Jallianwallah Bagh of 1919. It contrasts the problems and possibilities of reaching across to others, white-on-white, white-on-brown, brown-on-brown firstly via the events that take place in the Layton's garden at Rose Cottage and the eventual silencing of its intrepid missionary-philosopher, Barbie Batchelor; and secondly, twenty years on, in the Smalleys' attempts to cling on to their way of life after Partition via an apology of a garden. Whether their respective search for integrity represents a long overdue rejection of an inauthentic way of life in the face of a powerful Indian Renaissance or opens the possibility for a new dialogue is the key moral dilemma Scott asks his readers to address.

The final section of this dissertation, 'What Scott's Voice means to me' returns to my key research questions to consider their wider significance in the light of the empirical evidence above.

CHAPTER 1: VOICE-OVER

Using the figure of the stranger as my key vocal instrument, then, my purpose is to explore the role of sound and listening as important clues to Scott's search for a valid moral position about Britain's legacy during the *Raj*. Weaving the two together may help us better apprehend the criticisms made of his work to date, some of which in my view have been unfair. I believe that his quest evolves via a dynamic process of action and interaction, the various voices in concert at one moment, only to go their separate ways at another. Indeed, accompanying him on this journey may allow readers to concentrate on what M. M. Mahood calls 'the /more/ creative springs of action and positive values' in his work whilst also inviting critique.³¹

This chapter re-traces some of the steps I've already outlined but deepens and transforms my engagement with them. So, it is fruitful to say something more about voice as metaphor, the still relevant arguments over authorial voice, and the multi-vocal/ narrative devices Scott used, where the figure of the ethnographic stranger is key to my approach. It concludes with a brief exploration of Scott's own experience of India, including his experience in Timmapuram with his ex-havaldar in the 1960s, and the socio-cultural setting within which his fictional work was conceived and published.

Voice – An Elusive Metaphor

Firstly, then, the knotty question of authorial voice and the relation between writer, text and unknown reader that is crucial to understanding Scott's work. Voice is, of course, a metaphor, and metaphors are slippery. As Peter Elbow notes in his category-saturated formulations of the concept, the difficulty of pinning it down is part of a long-standing philosophical debate and few critics have been prepared to re-visit it of late, preferring to dismiss it as an unhelpful concept analytically.³²

Certainly, sight has become the dominant sense modality and, to quote Elbow again is most closely linked with our notions of rationality, such as 'idea', 'eidetic', or 'intuition', and their commonplace spoken usage, for example 'Do you see?' 'What's your perspective?' 'Is that clear?' In fact, sight can tell us a great deal about the surface of things, their external dimensions, shapes and forms when viewed from a fixed perspective. Specifically, it lends itself to a spectator view of the way we understand the world, in which knower and known are at several removes from one another. Johannes Fabian, for example, explores how in the

³¹ M. M. Mahood, 'Paul Scott's Guardians'. *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 1983, vol. 13, pp.244-258. <http://mmw.jstor.org/stable/3506124>. Downloaded 24th November 2020.

³² Peter Elbow, 'Voice in Writing Again: Embracing Contraries'. *College English*. 7 (November 2007) <http://scholarworks.umass.edu/engfacultypubs/7/>. Downloaded July 2017. See also Elbow, op cit., 1994. 'Introduction'.

attempt to be scientific, the people anthropologists work with never appear as immediate partners in a cultural exchange, 'but as spatially and ...temporarily distanced groups', an estrangement emphasized by the 'textually enforced elimination of the anthropologist's autobiographical voice'.³³

By contrast, sound, especially the sound of the voice, seems to arise deep within and is intensely real to us, however transient. In Walter Ong's seminal study of the changes in thinking brought about by the evolution from oral to literate societies, he notes:

Writing can never dispense with orality ... written texts all have to be related somehow, directly or indirectly, to the world of sound, the natural habitat of language, to yield their meaning.³⁴

It is no accident today, then, that voiceprints are as much a mark of identification as are fingerprints. Even committed anti-voice-ists, such as Darsie Bowden, concede that attending to voice helps establish the 'who' of any novel: who is speaking, who is the author, and who is the 'I' in question.³⁵

Well-rehearsed though the arguments are, it is still important to point to those figures in the debate who were influential at the time Scott wrote to better contextualise his own search for a valid voice. From the mid twentieth century onwards, the New Criticism's efforts to banish the authorial voice to the mortuary have been integral to literary criticism's emergence as a serious discipline. In emphasizing the importance of sight, distance and objectivity, Roland Barthes', for example, critiqued the notion that the novelist can whisper directly into the reader's ears, arguing that texts can only legitimately be treated as hermetically sealed systems of signs.³⁶ '*Il n'y a pas d'hors-texte*' as some deconstructionists claim. According to this formula, writers are not allowed to write, they get written.

Of course, words cannot be used straightforwardly to read voice or intention (in its common-sense usage). Even at his most avowedly polemical, Orwell, for example, knew the subterfuges behind the 'crystalline prose' for which he is justly admired. 'The art of writing is in fact largely the perversion of words...' he wrote.³⁷ 'The less obvious the perversion is, the more thoroughly it has been done'. Although Barthes' critique helped to modify the quasi-theological, over-determined authorial

³³ Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*. (New York: Columbia University Press, First published 1983, reprinted 2014), p.143.

³⁴ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. (London: Methuen 1982; reprinted London: Routledge, 1998) p.8.

³⁵ Bowden, op cit., p.7.

³⁶ Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author'. In Sean Burke (ed), *Authorship: From Plato to Postmodernism: A Reader*. (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1995), pp.125-131.

³⁷ George Orwell, 'New Words'. *New Writing*, 1940. <http://Orwell.ru/library/article/words/English/e-words>. Downloaded 21.06.2016.

voice that developed with the rise of 18th century liberal humanism and 19th century Romanticism, he never managed to dissuade readers from associating his own voice with his text, particularly when it came to his autobiography. More serious objections are at stake here. If taken to its logical extremes, Senayon Olaoluwa argues, the death of the author can only strip indigenous writers of their own memory, history and meaning.³⁸

Moreover, such a position omits the many ways of writing - often oblique - in which authors signal their meanings to the reader, even if their intentions necessarily change along the way. As John Haffenden (1988) remarks in his introduction to William Empson's book *Argufying: Essays on Literature and Culture*:

The inescapable paradox is that, if you deny any critical reference to an author's conscious intentions, you are left with nothing but to infer unconscious intentions – which are still intentions.³⁹

Crucially, as anthropologists who work directly in the field know, textualism is deaf to the ebb and flow of human relationships in which meanings are embedded in tone of voice and gestures as well as speech. Michael Jackson, one of anthropology's most sensitive phenomenological essayists and a novelist-cum poet notes that the fetish of textualism 'divides readers from authors and separates both from the world' just as surely as does its counterpart, positivism.⁴⁰ As with most attempts at grand theorizing, the attempt to revolutionize literary criticism often finds itself tied in knots of its own circularity.

Attempts to find a way out of the dilemma - leaving the task of interpreting a text entirely to the reader - do not hold either as Scott would be the first to agree. Any 're-birth of the reader' is not a free-for-all unless one is to become a hard-core relativist (which Scott was not). As Ania Loomba reminds us 'No one's voice is either a straightforward testimony to rebellion or an absolute theory of subaltern silence.'⁴¹ We need a 'both ... and' approach even though it means writing against the grain of European culture's strong visual bias.

However, this is only part of my argument. Voices can never be divorced from their conditions of use. What a particular body of work means only emerges in the active process of moving between it, the receptiveness of the reader's ear, and the context in which it is heard and re-heard. Crucially, Scott was particularly attuned to voices from the margins and those of 'ordinary people doing ordinary jobs of

³⁸ Senayon Olaoluwa, 'The Author Never Dies: Roland Barthes and the Postcolonial Project, *Kritikos*, vol. 4, April 2007. <https://intertheory.org/olaoluwa.htm>. Downloaded October 1st 2021.

³⁹ William Empson, *Argufying: Essays on Literature and Culture*. John Haffenden (ed). (London: Hogarth Press, 1988) p.19.

⁴⁰ Michael Jackson, *Paths Towards a Clearing. Radical Empiricism and Ethnographic Inquiry*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. 1989) p.184.

⁴¹ Loomba, op cit., p.197.

work at the time,' as he put it, because 'their work is so often affected by their sense of personal deprivation'.⁴² He continued elsewhere:

The inarticulate have always fascinated me – and the over-articulate are of course (I think) only a variation of that kind of person. Actually, I think one writes novels to give people a voice they don't ordinarily possess in life.⁴³

Although not writing directly about India's poverty-stricken masses, he was also 'studying up', so that his garrulous characters are often on the edge of privileged circles to which they can never quite belong.

In fact, the notion of a marginal or silenced voice is at the heart of much post-structuralist and post-colonial critique in both the social sciences and the humanities.⁴⁴ Gayatri Spivak's influential essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' refers to the general attribution of inferior status, especially of gender and caste in South Asian society.⁴⁵ And anthropologists, more than most, worry about poaching others' voices in their writing, let alone denying legitimacy to their own. Malinowski's well-intentioned aim of self-transcendence through dramatizing 'the native's point of view' morphed into fears of self/other deception.⁴⁶ Amidst a general nervousness about saying anything at all without risking accusations of self-indulgence or time-wasting navel gazing, Nigel Rapport, who wove his own fieldwork relations in Wanet around those of E. M. Forster's fictional characters, asks: 'Is the anthropological representation of the other decent? And is it even possible?'⁴⁷

Such anxieties have brought to the fore an enhanced sense of moral agency and a long overdue recognition of the ethical dimensions of authorship in both fieldwork and literary criticism. It is no coincidence, Dolar reminds us, that 'the voice has been the guiding trope of reflections on moral questions'.⁴⁸ Ethics and voice are necessarily related. Whilst no author can get matters entirely right, there is a moral obligation on both writer and reader not to get them badly wrong. Moreover, authors are inevitably answerable for what they write, even if their power to control others' interpretations thereafter is limited. If the author is dead, how is the reader

⁴² In Spurling, op cit., p.347.

⁴³ In Haswell, op cit (2011), p.7.

⁴⁴ See for example Bette London's study of the strategies of imitation, distortion and suppression under colonial rule. In *The Appropriated Voice: Narrative Authority in Conrad, Forster and Woolf*. (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1990).

⁴⁵ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' In *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds), (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), p.93.

⁴⁶ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1973, reprinted London: Fontana Press, 1993), p.23.

⁴⁷ Nigel Rapport, *The Prose and the Passion: Anthropology, Literature and the Writing of E. M. Forster*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p.5.

⁴⁸ Dolar, op cit., p. 83-84.

to have a moral relationship with the characters and predicaments, large and small, which the novelist is attempting to bring to life on the page? Without that moral sense, there is no way to orientate oneself in time and space.

With these tensions in mind, let me return to Scott's own equivocations on authorship that I referred to earlier. His capitalised utterance, 'THE WRITER IS NOT PRECISELY ME SO THAT I MANAGE TO ACHIEVE DETACHMENT AND INVOLVEMENT' harmonizes exactly with the sense in which I do want to use the sound of voice.⁴⁹ My aim is to come as close as I can to what Elbow calls 'the swamp', that area of integrity, authenticity behind Scott's words to tease out the doubts, conflicts and ambiguities behind his take on Britain's relationship with India's colonial past.⁵⁰ Peter Morey goes to the heart of the matter in asking exactly what was Scott's position on the British legacy in India?⁵¹ Just how complicit is Scott in identifying with a character's position, particularly when he notes in his essays that his characters had a way of 'saying things he hadn't meant them to say'?⁵²

However, as that humanitarian scholar and historian of ideas, Isiah Berlin notes, the notion that matters of value are answerable objectively, or that their truths are universal, easily accessible and non-conflictual does not hold when we put our ears to the ground.⁵³ So, it is not enough simply to assert Scott's distinctiveness as a morally committed writer. Any critic also needs to show how he makes pursuing such a moral approach audible. By any standards, Scott's dense argumentative style, 1960's colloquialisms and numerous *longeurs* are not always easy to listen to. Which brings me first to his use of multi-vocality, and then to my chosen vocal narrative strategy he develops, namely the figure of the stranger: to what critics have so far said about it, and what an ethnographic stranger's approach might add to our understanding of the many voices in his text.

Multi-Vocality - A Babel of Tongues?

Few readers of Scott can fail to notice his use of multi-vocality, or the way his characters hear the same incident in different registers, such was his desire to do justice to as many points of view as he could. The result is sometimes a Babel of tongues, arguing, grumbling, gossiping, persuading, terrorizing, all with varying degrees of energy and plausibility. But the authority with which his characters' accounts are often evoked in Scott's work obscures the inevitable contradictions, half-truths and ellipses that reverberate through anyone's account of things. For

⁴⁹ *MAM*, op cit., p.52.

⁵⁰ Elbow, op cit., p.11.

⁵¹ Peter Morey, *Fictions of India: Narrative and Power*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp 152, 156.

⁵² Barbie, for example. Scott conceded that 'Barbie ran away with him'. In Spurling, op cit., p.347.

⁵³ Isiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*. (London: Pimlico Press, 1990; reprinted 2003), pp.183-195.

example, there are thirteen renditions of Daphne Manners' life including that of her own diary, all of which are sung from different hymn books. All are human, all fallible. The effect is alternately hypnotic and provocative as we shall see, an ambiguity that reflects my own discomfort with too final a rendering of Britain's racialized imperial legacy. As Michael Jackson puts it: 'One can never know a situation so fully that one can judge how best to respond to it'.⁵⁴ At best, we settle for approximations.

So, whether Scott's chorus of voices and his refusal to settle on a single unifying theme in his novels strengthen his moral voice or not has been difficult for critics to answer unequivocally. Earlier critics often dismissed him as 'anti-British', an ironic comment in view of what was to follow. Robin Moore, for example, noted that the number of negative reviews far outweighed the positive ones.⁵⁵ Since the 1970's criticisms of his apparently too pro-British sympathies have become more audible. There are several strands to this critique.

First, critics, such as Jenny Sharpe⁵⁶, Keith Booker⁵⁷ and Salman Rushdie⁵⁸ claim that his voice is too loud, charging him variously with nostalgia, *Raj* revisionism, Anglocentrism, a weary repetition of 'The White Man's Burden', and even narcissism. For example, Jenny Sharpe, who describes herself in hybrid terms as 'an Anglo-Indian Eurasian born in London and raised in Bombay',⁵⁹ argues that the absence of Indian women other than the servants is 'symptomatic of the colonial discourse to which it/Scott's work/ belongs'.⁶⁰ In turn, Keith Booker suggested that Scott reduced aspects of his protagonists' 'behaviours' to the status once occupied by culture, part of an attack on Evolutionary Psychology of which Scott could not be aware.⁶¹ And Rushdie was scathing about the use of rape as the central motif, complaining bitterly that the Indians in Scott's tetralogy were reduced to 'bit parts' so that the Orient remained passive, always written 'about'.

This ignores the subtler ambiguities in Scott's voice that have been partly anaesthetized in the subsequent television series without evaluating what manner of voice this might be.⁶² Clearly Rushdie has done little close reading of the texts

⁵⁴ Michael Jackson, *Life Within Limits: Well-Being in a World of Want*. (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2011), p.70.

⁵⁵ Robin Moore, *Paul Scott's Raj*. (London: William Heinemann, 1990), pp.116-8.

⁵⁶ Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1993), p.144.

⁵⁷ M. Keith Booker, *Colonial Power, Colonial Texts: India in the Modern British Novel*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), p.12.

⁵⁸ Salman Rushdie, op cit., p.128.

⁵⁹ Sharpe, op. cit., p.19.

⁶⁰ Ibid p.1.

⁶¹ M. Keith Booker, op cit.

⁶² It is nonetheless disconcerting to find that Sathnam Sanghera unceremoniously lumps together *Jewel in the Crown* (1984) with *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, (2011), *Viceroy's House* (2017),

themselves. And as we shall see, Scott was too canny a craftsman to succumb to the questionable practice of 'giving voice' to Indian women with whom he was not familiar, although his sensitive evocation of Eurasian Lady Chatterjee is surely an honourable exception. Neither does it mean embracing the equally disingenuous view that only the oppressed can write about themselves. But Scott knew the limitations of being a stranger. So, I share Theodore Steinberg's interpretation here: that Scott's work is clearly and unapologetically about the British in India at the time, 'what they did there, why they did it, what the Indian experience meant to Britain'.⁶³

Secondly, there is the charge of narcissism. Jenny Sharpe, for example, argues that his work

marks a mourning for the loss of Empire that masquerades as self-criticism, a resurrection of the civilizing mission from its ashes'.⁶⁴

Too much of the 'Johnny Sahib' perhaps, in Scott's earlier novels.

However, Janis Haswell disagrees, noting from his letters and holographs that 'he plainly rejects any notions of a narcissistic consciousness, a sovereign self who sees the world in his own image'.⁶⁵ But she goes on, 'Neither is Scott a post-structuralist belittling the importance of a coherent core of individual identity'. As Scott himself claimed 'I'm not writing about the Twilight of the Raj in a nostalgic mood of celebration of something dead and gone'.⁶⁶ In fact, the reflexivity that I am after in Scott's work clearly negates such a charge. For me, the relation between inner and outer ear is more interesting than the ear that is only turned outwards, deaf to how its own reactions influence what is being attended to.

Thirdly, there is the possibility that Scott's work might also be part of a turn inwards towards melancholia that implies a suffering Britain rather than a suffering India. According to this line of argument Scott's voice is not just inaudible. It is repressed.

In pursuit of this critique, Jason Mezey has drawn on Freud's theory of melancholy to point to the 'guilt, self-punishment, identification with and ambiguity towards the lost object' that he argues characterizes Scott's voice in the *Quartet*.⁶⁷ Again, Scott

and *Victoria and Abdul* (2017). Sathnam Sanghera, *Empireland: How Imperialism Has Shaped Modern Britain*. (London: Penguin Random House UK, 2021), p.187.

⁶³Theodore Steinberg. *20th Century Epic Novels*. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), p.143.

⁶⁴ Sharpe, op cit., p.19.

⁶⁵ Haswell, (2002), op cit., p.264.

⁶⁶ Letter to Roland Gant, editor of Heinemann, 15th December 1968. In Haswell, Vol 11 op cit., p 225.

⁶⁷ Jason Howard Mezey, 'Mourning the Death of the *Raj*? Melancholia as Historical Engagement in Paul Scott's 'Raj Quartet'. *Studies in the Novel*, 38 (3) Fall 2006), p.329.

insisted this misrepresented his intention. Despite his earlier view of liberal humanism as

... the human consciousness of human dignity that began with the Renaissance and came to an end in the form we know it in the Second World War and its aftermath ...⁶⁸

he still saw what he called 'the death and interment of liberalism as a living issue.'⁶⁹ The key values that animate liberal humanism can no more be consigned to the mortuary than the authorial voice itself, whatever the jibes about 'bourgeois gentleness', ineffectuality or 'sterility' might be.⁷⁰ Other critics have supported Scott's claim. For example, the historian Peter Childs argues that his stance not only undermines 'the favourite tropes of imperial psychic drives.'⁷¹ As we shall see, Scott deliberately plays on them.

But by far the most telling criticism of his work has come from a fourth group of critics, particularly Marxists such as Benita Parry⁷² and Daniel Colwell⁷³ who argue that with so many moral and political choices it is difficult to gain any consistent sense of the author's own voice on Britain's colonial legacy, leaving Scott open to the charge of squeamishness. Not only does the apparent inconsistency fail to make for a vigorous or harmonious story line. The careful weighing up of several possibilities becomes a substitute for action, a failure to deal with social reality, forfeiting all sense of a would-be ethical authorial voice.

Scott strongly rejected this line of argument. Rather he saw his work contributing to a literature of dissent that relied on active questioning and a vigorous scepticism that he never allowed to collapse into cynicism. It was not his job to supply easy answers. As he put it:

Commitment is for the old and serene. I am not yet either. For myself, the act of writing a novel is an act for asking questions, not answering them. My curiosity is more valuable to me than are my transient assumptions ... Writing a novel is like peeling an onion ... if you peel away the pros and

⁶⁸ *MAM*, op cit., p.49.

⁶⁹ *MAM* op cit., pp 69-70.

⁷⁰ Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. (Oxford: Blackwells, 1983) pp.199-200. See also C. B. Cox, *The Free Spirit: A Study of Liberal Humanism in the novels of George Eliot, Henry James, E. M. Forster, Virginia Woolf and Angus Wilson*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 7 and 161-168.

⁷¹ Peter Childs, *Paul Scott's 'Raj Quartet': History and Division*. ELS Monograph Series, no.77. (Melbourne: University of Victoria Press 1998) op cit., p24.

⁷² Parry, op cit., (1975), 359-369.

⁷³ Daniel Colwell, 'I am Your Mother and Your Father: Paul Scott's *Raj Quartet* and the Dissolution of Identity'. In Bart Moore-Gilbert (ed) *Writing India 1757-1990*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp.213-235.

cons should you find yourself with a kernel of truth or with the seed of another onion?⁷⁴

In fact, the penultimate essay in his collection, 'Literature and the Social Conscience' concludes with a whole page of questions, none of which can be answered unequivocally.⁷⁵

However, the fact that Scott often refers to Benita Parry in his letters does suggest that her critique bothered him, although he found it repetitive if not unintelligible.⁷⁶ For example, her representation of a scene in *Division of the Spoils* as 'sentimental' (apparently indicative of imperial spirituality) was seriously awry, he noted to Francine Weinbaum.⁷⁷ It is ironic, then, to find that those parts of his work that Parry warms to are not the expository but the metaphorical passages which free the reader's imagination.⁷⁸

There again, Scott changed his mind about commitment in fiction, stating that:

Nothing is worse for a novelist than to see all sides of the question and fail to support one. You must commit yourself, stick your neck out. Then your novel will say something.⁷⁹

Such apparent undecidability is always unsettling, but it is also provocative. Critics such as Janis Haswell,⁸⁰ Peter Morey,⁸¹ Michael Gorra,⁸² and John Lennard⁸³ all agree that Scott's multi-vocality is his key strength. It keeps alive the tension between the two authorial extremes I've outlined earlier, but constantly problematizes them, complicating any simple moral divide between 'Good Guys' and 'Bad Guys', Wounders and Wounded. In doing so, as Alison Donnell points out, it also unsettles the tendency of postcolonial texts to present a politically spotless portfolio that 'both chokes critics and arrests the possibility for making meanings'.⁸⁴ And David Gilmour was right, I think, to remind us of those pendulum

⁷⁴ In Haswell, op cit., (2011), p.23. From a biographical resume written by Scott to his publishers, 1966. See also *MAM* op. cit., p.141.

⁷⁵ *MAM*, op cit., pp.148-9. For example, 'should he bend his novel to "the uses of public action", or 'should he distrust the limits imposed on men in the world of real action?' See also Haswell, op cit. (2011), p.23.

⁷⁶ Letter to Francine Williams, 22.11.1975. In Haswell, op. cit., Vol 11 (2011), p.268.

⁷⁷ See Appendix 2.

⁷⁸ Parry, op cit.

⁷⁹ *MAM*, op cit., p.79.

⁸⁰ Haswell, op cit., (2002), (2011).

⁸¹ Peter Morey, op cit.

⁸² Michael Gorra, *After Empire: Scott, Naipaul and Rushdie*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

⁸³ John Lennard, op cit.

⁸⁴ Alison Donnell, 'She Ties Her Tongue: The Problems of Cultural Paralysis in Postcolonial Criticism', *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, vol. 26 (1), January 1995, pp.101-116.

swings in historical interpretation where the injustices exposed by one generation tend to create their own exclusions in the next.⁸⁵

Which brings me to the second strand in my thesis, the voice of the stranger.

Voice and the Ethnographic Stranger

Scott's writing comes alive via certain key strategies, such as playing with time-as-sequence, time-as-cycle, or interweaving fact with fiction to enhance or disguise the sound of his moral voice, thus forcing the reader back onto his/her own consciousness. Literary critics and historians have often been at the forefront of this kind of textual analysis. But surprisingly little has been heard from anthropologists, although John Van Maanan's study of voice, style and readership, with its witty evocation of the darker arts of writing fieldwork might have alerted me earlier to the connections between disciplines post-Malinowski.⁸⁶ In fact, a renewed awareness of the relation between literary strategies and authorial voice marked a decisive moment in 1980s anthropology, highlighting the difficulties of translating what is said and heard in the field without simply imitating speech or silence in ethnographic writing.⁸⁷

So, it was a while before I recognized the ethnographic significance of Scott's use of the Stranger, officially Guy Perron, the Cambridge historian who returns to India in the 1960's, as did Scott, to piece together the mystery of the Manners case. Not that the term was invisible. In fact, references to it are liberally scattered throughout the text. I had read them but had not listened attentively enough.

Hovering between inner and outer self, text and reader, the figure of the stranger – 'the man (sic) who comes today and stays tomorrow' - has a long history in the humanities and shares obvious affinities with post-colonial scholarship.⁸⁸ Michael Gorra, for example, describes it as

... the central trope of all colonial encounters – the attempt to find the words with which to know and describe the seemingly alien and strange.⁸⁹

However, it was not until Georg Simmel's pithy essay published posthumously in 1950 that the figure – with a voice of its own - was taken up by anthropologists.⁹⁰ The tense, hybrid role of the ethnographic stranger, deliberately distanced from everything that is familiar the better to call his/her own culture into question is key

⁸⁵ David Gilmour, *Surprises of Empire* *New York Review of Books*, Nov. 2nd, 2006.

⁸⁶ John Van Maanan, *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography*. (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1988). I am grateful to my examiners for reminding me of this timely work.

⁸⁷ James Clifford and George E. Marcus (eds), *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1986), p.12.

⁸⁸ Simmel, *op cit.*, pp. 143-149.

⁸⁹ Gorra, *op cit.*, p.50.

⁹⁰ Simmel, *op cit.* p.143-149.

to any anthropological fieldwork and resonates strongly with Scott's own use of the device. Ethnographers' 'close-in contact with far-out lives' as Geertz put it, was a perfect fit.⁹¹

Simmel gives the Stranger some interesting attributes. Remote yet close, actively participating in a group's activities, yet able to detach him/herself, the stranger seems to belong everywhere 'importing qualities into one's group that do not and cannot stem from the group itself.'⁹² Hence relationships are chancy affairs. In everyday action and interaction with others, it means being constantly alert for nuances, learning how to speak, when to hold one's tongue, sometimes imagining what people dare not even consciously think. Precisely because of an ability to move about, he argued, the stranger:

... often receives the most surprising revelations and confidences, at times reminiscent of a confessional, about matters which are kept carefully hidden from everybody with whom one is close, often trusted with confidences that members of a group are unable to express otherwise.⁹³

Yet, being between two worlds but at home in neither, ethnographic strangers may find themselves simultaneously trusted, yet mistrusted, vulnerable yet powerful, included and excluded from everything that is going on in a group. Geertz, for example, in his classic account of a Balinese cockfight, had little meaningful contact with his hosts for over six months until a police raid on the fight caught him running for cover with the other villagers.⁹⁴ Evidently, he was not the colonial informer the villagers thought.

Not surprisingly, Simmel argues, the only livelihood often available to the stranger is that of a short-stay middleman or trader rather than that of a property or landowner. The Wandering Jew is a classic example, but Britain's occupation of India is another plausible candidate.⁹⁵ Although some administrators, military personnel and their families stayed – and stayed on - others were just passing through without learning the language, either literally or metaphorically.

Simmel's is largely a spatial analysis of relations involving sight, distance and objectivity, where the stranger is positioned as an 'outer-wandering, physical, social and cultural figure' often excluded from the mainstream, according to Marotta.⁹⁶ Yet as Michael Jackson observes, no ethnographic stranger can work

⁹¹ Geertz, op cit., 1973, p.6.

⁹² Simmel op cit., p.145.

⁹³ ibid p.145.

⁹⁴ Geertz, op.cit.,1973, p.412-453.

⁹⁵ Simmel op cit., p.144.

⁹⁶ Vince Marotta, 'The Stranger and Social Theory', *Thesis Eleven*. August 2000, p122 (pp.121-134).

without involving all the senses, particularly the immediacy of hearing, listening and feeling.⁹⁷

Hence theorists such as Zygmunt Bauman have elaborated on Simmel's outline, emphasizing a privatized, existential, marginal figure who speaks to the novelist's interest in interiority.⁹⁸ Importantly, Bauman noted, the stranger 'disturbs the resonance between physical and psychical distance /being both/ *physically* close but *spiritually* remote ... His proximity suggests a moral relationship, whilst his remoteness implies a contractual one.'⁹⁹ In fact, Bauman's stranger has given up the certainty of absolutes. His is the introverted, anxious, alienated self who has lost all sense of direction. Whilst the emphasis between the two is one of degree, the tension between them, and thus between inner and outer voice will, I believe, be richly provocative in helping us to better understand Scott's moral stance.

A practical example of the relation between voice and the ethnographic stranger comes from Scott's own experience in India about which I have said little to date. As we know Scott himself was no armchair theorist, but was stationed in India, Assam, and Malaya during 1943-1946, and he returned to India several times during the 1960s. Most telling was his attempt to 'go native' with a short stay with his ex-havaldar, 'Naranjya' Dass at his Timmapuram village home in 1964. Unaware that Dass was now village elder with a reputation to maintain, Scott found himself occupying the entire floor of Dass' one-roomed house, being waited on hand and foot and close-shaven in full view of the village.

Worst of all was an attack of amoebiasis where he was forced to defecate in the surrounding fields without toilet paper according to Hindu custom, with Dass following at a respectful distance behind. The paranoia that gripped him is all too familiar to anthropologists. As he read and re-read old letters and fretted over his luggage, without which he was 'simply not explained' as Barbie Batchelor is to say of her trunk, he wondered if Dass was secretly re-enacting some real or imaginary wrong he had committed when their positions of authority had been reversed in the Army.¹⁰⁰ No amount of physical proximity could create the intimacy Scott longed for. Like Orwell's stay in miners' cottages where he washed at their sinks and ate at their tables, Scott could not induce his host to call him anything but 'Sir'.¹⁰¹

At the same time, he was aware of the little courtesies that bring people closer together: the scented jasmine laid on his breakfast table each morning, the visit to

⁹⁷ Michael Jackson, (1989), op cit., p.6; see also *Between One and Another*. (London: University of California Press, 2002), p.173; and *As Wide as the World is Wise: Reinventing Philosophical Anthropology*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), p.3.

⁹⁸ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

⁹⁹ Bauman, op cit., p.60.

¹⁰⁰ TS: p.272, p. 279.

¹⁰¹ George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*. (London: Victor Gollancz, 1937; reprinted London: Penguin Books 2014) p.145.

the temple by bullock-cart, an experience Scott wove into Daphne's account of her own visit with Hari Kumar. However, writing about the experience later, he was clear about its darker implications:

Beneath my own liberal voice was the sound of Enoch's voice that accounts for the hate and contempt of Whites for the other ... a background sound. In major key was the honest admission of something that appalled me – the growing shadow of my own ingratitude, my ridiculous irrational fears, my utter dependence upon the amenities of my own kind of civilisation ... I understood better, therefore, the emotional and physical impulses that had always prompted the British in India to sequester themselves in clubs and messes and forts. It was a simple enough lesson. One could learn it from books. It is better for a writer to learn lessons from life.¹⁰²

Such a short stay needs the intimate hand of a Nirad Chaudhuri, controversial scholar and auto- biographer to bring the village to life.¹⁰³ So, it is easy to see how the critics we met earlier might mistake such a confessional for squeamishness, or even narcissism. It is true that Scott gave Dass no opportunity to challenge the series of 'I did not like ...' statements about his hospitality that are repeated down the page, or question how that experience had been used in Scott's fiction.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, Dass' refusal to efface the distance between them leaves open the question of how devoted his adherence to the old order had been.

But that would be peevish. To the charge that we are hearing too much about Scott's reactions rather than the social facts he was there to gather, I argue that his reactions are an integral part of the datum that we ignore at our peril. In fact it is precisely that authorial 'I' that reduces the temptation to be categorical. Using his role as ethnographic stranger Scott is opening our ears to just how difficult Fabian's notion of 'co-evalness' is to articulate in practice, deliberately probing his unknown reader's complicity in reproducing racial inequalities, fifty years on.¹⁰⁵ It matters who does the speaking.

Neither does Scott lose that critical moral edge in his novels. So, we see Guy Perron collecting data from records, scanning diaries, recording transcripts, and conducting interviews. In fact, the stranger is everywhere, busy looking over a character's shoulder here or eavesdropping on a conversation there, speaking first in one voice then in another, much like the figure of a *duende*, a Spanish term for an imp, goblin or ghost that Scott was drawn to, although the image goes back at

¹⁰² *MAM*, op cit., p.95.

¹⁰³ Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*. (London: Macmillan, 1951. Reprinted London: Picador, 1999). To discover his craven dedication to the British Empire, missing from my edition, is troubling.

¹⁰⁴ *MAM* op cit., p.95.

¹⁰⁵ Fabian, op cit.

least as far as Socrates.¹⁰⁶ And it is a pesky voice. Just when Scott (or the unknown reader) thinks he has a grip on things, the stranger gets in the way, reflecting at every level the uncertainty of our minds, the wilful misunderstanding of events we help to fashion, and our perverse insistence on taking things to the edge. 'The stranger is both tempter and conscience, a concert in himself of good and evil', Scott wrote. 'He (sic) is his own creator and his own critic.'¹⁰⁷

And such is the ethnographic stranger's voice here. I believe that such reflexivity is an analytical strength not a methodological weakness, one that puts one's own prejudices at risk, the necessary condition for any dialogue between self and other, the familiar and the strange, to take place. The most urgent truths, this dissertation argues, do not lie at either one pole or the other of the debate on Britain's imperial legacy but in those momentary pauses between the notes where author and reader are in silent communion one with another. This is where life transpires, Michael Jackson writes, despite all our attempts to fix our own refrain within it.¹⁰⁸ Whilst we may not like ambivalence, we may learn to tolerate – even welcome it – with an open heart and mind.

Let Scott's own words suffice:

In one's heart there must always be, I think, the murmur of a doubt about any position one may have taken up. And the human heart, especially, is within the novelist's province. He (sic) must detect and record the murmur as well as he can. He cannot do much better than listen attentively to his own.¹⁰⁹

Finally let me turn to the context in which Scott conceived his work.

'The Raj Quartet' and 'Staying On'.

Scott wrote *The Quartet* and *Staying On* in late middle age, shortly after he returned from India in the 1960's and the five volumes were only published some twenty to twenty-five years after Partition, so important was the breathing space the delay gave him. On the face of it, the England he spoke from had changed dramatically: most of what constituted the Empire and England's image of itself as moral guardian of half the world's underprivileged was lost to expose the contradictions between a reforming liberalism and a paternalistic imperialism that had informed the work of early theorists such as Said.¹¹⁰ Post War II, England ceded pride of place to the Cold War superpowers and turned inwards, relieved to forget its imperial past. Not hospitable to strangers at the best of times, the

¹⁰⁶ In Dolar, op. cit., pp.83-4.

¹⁰⁷ *MAM*, op cit., p.137.

¹⁰⁸ Jackson, op.cit., (2011), p.xiii

¹⁰⁹ *MAM*, op cit., p.115.

¹¹⁰ Said, op cit., 1993 and 2003.

government's series of Immigration Laws in the 1960s tightened the rules on entry for migrants from the Indian Sub-Continent, (a term that is still in use), even those from East Africa fleeing from Idi Amin's dictatorship.¹¹¹ An England that had experienced the race riots in Notting Hill proved to be a fertile climate for Enoch Powell's infamous 'rivers of blood' speech and prompted an intense period of soul-searching, guilt, shame and, as Gilroy has argued, melancholy, if not melancholia.¹¹²

Nor were the changes confined to England. The India Scott left behind had its own troubles: the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War, the 1971 Bangladesh crisis and subsequent Emergency, the on-going troubles in Kashmir, the troubling rise of Hindu nationalism, and, as I write in 2019 the rioting over the Citizenship Amendment Act were not unconnected with the events leading up to Partition. Not surprisingly, then, the early reviews of Scott's work were deemed to be 'anti-British' – ironic, perhaps, in view of the drubbing that was to follow.

Which brings me to the late novels themselves. Set against the distant European and subsequent Wars in the Pacific, they cover in labyrinthine detail the years between the Quit India Movement riots of 1942 against the British internment of Congress leaders without trial and the bloody massacres of 1947 and chart the gradual awareness by Scott's Pankot hill station community of the demise of the *Raj*. They also refer backwards in time to those flashpoints in British imperial history: the 1857 'Mutiny', (or War of Independence); the partition of Bengal in 1905 which, although reversed, created a precedent for 1947; and the Amritsar massacre in 1919, that symbolized the British government's constant equivocation over Indian independence and its backlash. Paradoxically it was only *Staying On*, Scott's fifth and final novel 'in a minor key' about an India which, superficially at least, had fundamentally altered, that received public acclaim.¹¹³ He was awarded the Booker prize not long before his death in 1978.

By any standard, the *Quartet* is a demanding piece, covering some two thousand eight-hundred pages in my edition, complementing the post War II appetite for weighty fiction. Like the best ethnographies, it represents both lengthy meditation and often remorseless interrogation between inner and outer voice that speak to our own times, not just the period in question. Indeed, some scholars such as Goonetilleke¹¹⁴ and Steinberg¹¹⁵ term it an epic, and it is worth remembering that the earlier 'Western' epics of Homer and Virgil or their 'Eastern' equivalents, *The*

¹¹¹ Lennard, personal communication, 2018.

¹¹² Gilroy, op cit.

¹¹³ Yasmine Gooneratne, 'Paul Scott's 'Staying On': Finale in a Minor Key', *Journal of Indian Writing in English*, (9) (July 1981) pp.1-12.

¹¹⁴ D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke. 'Paul Scott's later novels: The Unknown Indian', *Modern Asian Studies*, 41 (4), July 2007, pp.797-847.

¹¹⁵ Theodore Steinberg, *20th Century Epic Novels*. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005).

Ramayana or *Mahabharatha* were spoken and sung, not read. Each novel is largely self-contained, but each draws on the other by means of repetition, variation and elaboration.

The following chapters show how I've responded to Scott's invitation to converse with him as he searched for a moral stance that rang true to his experience, and to the point where I can unravel the text itself.

CHAPTER 2: RECORDING THE RECORD, INTERROGATING THE INTERROGATION

The politics of colonial rule from the 18th century onwards, if not much of the West's understanding of India, rest on an accumulation of records 'to unlock the secrets of India's past,' post-colonial scholar Sara Suleri argues.¹¹⁶ In fact, the sheer volume of reports now lodged at the India office, nicely documented by recent historians, attests to the industry with which administrators set about their task – fair and foul.¹¹⁷

All enquiry has its imperialistic notes, so records can become potent tools in the way that knowledge is created, stored and circulated about their subjects. Visible to those in the know, India's colonial records mapped specific geographical regions, made elaborate classifications of populations according to race, tribe and caste,^{118 119} and developed archival institutions themselves, processes in which anthropology's ethnographic stranger has sometimes played an unedifying role.¹²⁰ Consider, for example, Sir Herbert Risley's unfortunate contribution to racial science, a series of ethnological surveys on the ground 'in which humans were displayed along with details of height, length of upper arm, lower arm, and thigh', complete with its unpleasant 'nasal index'.¹²¹ Although he was exasperated at being unable to elicit precise facts this in no way diminished the authority of his grasp.¹²² In fact, the practice of linking statistical evidence of people's physical traits to their customs, beliefs and artefacts helped legitimate colonial rule, whereby individual voice was irrelevant as Louis Dumont's classic study on caste noted fifty years later. The emphasis is on 'the collective whole, on collective man (sic)', Dumont wrote.¹²³

¹¹⁶ Sara Suleri, op cit., p.30.

¹¹⁷ David Gilmour, *The British in India: Three Centuries of Ambition and Experience*. (London: Allen Lane, 2018; reprinted London: Penguin 2019), pp.172-5. A champion of individual rather than collective voices, he cites several examples of record-making – on the ravages of the Rhinoceros Beetle, on Inscriptions of early Gupta kings, and on Sanskrit manuscripts that caution against too blanket a condemnation of their role in legitimating colonial domination. p.523.

¹¹⁸ Laura Dudley Jenkins, 'Another "People of India" Project: Colonial and National Anthropology', *J. Asian Studies*, 62(4), Nov. 2003, pp.1143-1170.

¹¹⁹ Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), p.5.

¹²⁰ Annelisa Riles (ed) *Documents: Artefacts of Modern Knowledge*. (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2006), p.10, and pp. 2-31.

¹²¹ Sir Herbert Risley, *The People of India: A Series of Photographic Illustrations with Descriptive Letter Press of the Races and Tribes of India*. (First published London: 1915; reprinted New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1999).

¹²² Laura Jenkins, op cit.

¹²³ Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), p.319, although this was a position he modified later.

But this deadening emphasis on abstractions about groups of people, rather than on the lived relation between a person's inner and outer voice is precisely what I'm objecting to. As E.M. Forster concludes: 'Each of us knows from our own experience that there is something beyond the evidence.'¹²⁴ However, if the author is absent from the record who is accountable for the process of selection and omission? What assumptions are being unconsciously smuggled into its mandate? Crucially, the ethnographic stranger knows that what is not recorded, what he/she is ear- as well as eyewitness to - can give the lie to more conventional attempts to capture the field visually. It is often a tone of voice, the resonance of a phrase, a throw-away remark or listening for what goes without saying that linger in the mind long after fieldwork notes and the written monograph are left behind.

This section, then, asks how records were voiced, resisted or silenced by Scott's fictional protagonists under imperial rule; what counted as evidence, on whose authority, and who had access to them. I'm listening not just to the record itself, but to the process of recording through action and interaction between people whose relationship to one another is rarely symmetrical. I'll argue that careful listening may allow us to understand this aspect of Scott's ideas on the nature of Britain's moral responsibility under colonial rule in India in ways that sight does not. For example, the unreflective assumption that 'racism is a discourse that thinks with its eyes, not its ears' becomes salient, as we shall see.¹²⁵

Although Scott rarely made records whilst he was in India in the 1940's, according to his former student Francine Weinbaum, he had an eidetic memory for detail, absorbing India's sights, sounds and smells along the way.¹²⁶ So, the *Quartet* is full of references to written and photographic records which are collected by Scott's official ethnographic stranger, Guy Perron: from diaries, transcripts, depositions, letters, cartoons, scrap books, suicide notes, to treaties.

The two kinds of records I am interested in here are, on the face of it, worlds apart spatially and temporally and are drawn from different parts of the *Quartet*. Firstly, the judicial or semi-judicial records that Scott compiled, to illustrate the interrogations of so-called political cases which the British Government tried without the aid of a jury. For example, under the Rowlatt Acts that were imposed after the First World War, some 22,000 Indians were imprisoned in this way in 1942, a figure which is likely to be an underestimate.¹²⁷ George Orwell, himself a member of the Indian police force for five years, was familiar with such detentions

¹²⁴ E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*. (NY and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1927, copyright renewed 1955), p.63.

¹²⁵ Michael Bull and Les Back (eds), *The Auditory Culture Reader*. (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2003), p.14.

¹²⁶ Francine Weinbaum, *Paul Scott: A Critical Study*, (Austin: University of Texas, (1992); Hilary Spurling, *Paul Scott: A Life*, (London: Hutchinson (1990).

¹²⁷ Moore, Robin, op cit., p.148.

as he was with the canings and humiliating punishments such as ‘crawling orders’ that took place in foetid jails of the kind that Hari Kumar occupied.¹²⁸ And Shashi Tharoor documents in chilling detail some of the brutalities used to repress the Quit India movement.¹²⁹ Ironically the rule of law is still considered to be Britain’s finest legacy in India, he reminds us.¹³⁰

In the *Quartet*, my chief example is the unofficial testimony obtained from Hari Kumar by the white District Commissioner, Nigel Rowan, and ‘Mr.’ Gopal, the elderly Indian civil servant from the Secretariat, appointed as a concession to dispassionate judgement. Detained in Kandipat jail under the Defence of India rules allegedly for political subversion rather than Daphne’s rape, Hari has been sadistically tortured by Ronald Merrick, the Superintendent of Police, who represents the other key institution that symbolized Britain’s occupation of India.¹³¹ Hari’s lengthy interrogation, skilfully delayed until the end of *Day of the Scorpion*, forms one of the most evocative scenes in the whole tetralogy to bear ear-and-eyewitness to Scott’s critique of the darker tones of British imperial rule.

My second example, the journal, is written in a different register. Journal or diary writing was a practice eagerly adopted by white, mostly middle- and upper-class women who accompanied their administrative or military husbands to foreign parts as a way of ‘inscribing the self’ in conditions of exile.¹³² Like the ethnographic stranger’s fieldnotes, journals occupy an ambiguous status: part intimate personal evocation composed directly from the heart; and part *aide memoire* whose factual verisimilitude can be used as evidence in the public domain. I use the terms interchangeably here.

I’ll explore the lengthy journal Daphne Manners writes to Lady Manners shortly before her death giving birth to her daughter, Parvati that forms a fitting climax to Scott’s first volume, *Jewel in the Crown*. It is a moving, critically reflective analysis of her relationship with Hari and of the sexual dynamics of imperialism. In searching for Scott’s moral voice, the two kinds of records may have more in common than meets the stranger’s eye. Malinowski, the Polish anthropologist whom we met earlier and who developed a more intimate conception of participant

¹²⁸ George Orwell, *Burmese Days*. (London: Victor 1935; reprinted in *The Complete Novels of George Orwell*. 2nd ed., (London: Penguin Classics, 2009), pp.79-209.

¹²⁹ Shashi Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India*. (London: Penguin, 2016), p.167 (First published as *An Era of Darkness: The Politics of Empire*, 2016).

¹³⁰ Tharoor, op.cit., p.202.

¹³¹ Strictly speaking, section 144 of the Indian Penal Code. Personal communication, Dr. Florian Stadler.

¹³² See for example, Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff (eds), *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women’s Diaries*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), p. 20.

observation that he recorded in his celebrated but controversial diary, was aware of how much material he omitted.¹³³ Both demand careful listening.

The Interrogation at Kandipat jail

First, then, the unofficial interrogation of Hari Kumar in Kandipat jail that takes place in *Day of the Scorpion*. References to it are voiced by various characters throughout the tetralogy and Scott returned to his predicament again and again. He devotes nearly eighty pages to a sequence which is carefully orchestrated, theatrical in intensity, labyrinthine in its detail. According to Janis Haswell's analysis of Scott's philosophy of place, it is the one static scene in the novel.¹³⁴ Certainly, the spectacle of Hari as the object of others' gaze is testament to Scott's eye for the visual geometry of space as it settles on the lay-out of the interrogation room where we find Hari shackled to a chair, his body brutally exposed under the glare of the room's single spotlight. One of Macaulay's 'Brown-skinned Englishmen' and a perfect example of Simmel's stranger who belongs neither to England nor India, Hari has met his nemesis.¹³⁵ Everything conspires to put him at arms-length from human contact.

But listening to the interrogation as a dynamic social practice brings out the immediacy of the proceedings and evokes Scott's mistrust of precisely the foreclosure that archival records demand.¹³⁶ In fact, his dense, argumentative style which at times verges on parody together with his richly varied prose invigorates the whole sequence as he moves from one character's voice to another.

The stranger follows Lady Manners as Rowan installs her in prison room 'O' above the windowless interrogation room below. The room is bare except for table, chair, telephone, and a small grille at room's end through which Lady Manners can see and hear the proceedings below, an aerial view typical of the ideal surveyor for whom sound is deadened. A green intercom button connects her to Rowan but excludes Gopal and a nameless shorthand writer who make up the interrogation panel, neither of whom are aware of her elevated presence. Moreover, Hari is unaware of his intimate connection with Lady Manners. Courting certain disapproval, she has undertaken to bring up Daphne's child, the longed-for offspring of her tryst with Hari, not that of the subsequent rapists who are never caught.

¹³³ Bronislaw Malinowski, op cit.

¹³⁴ Haswell, Janis, 'Images of Rape and Buggery: Paul Scott's view of the dual evils of Empire'. *Studies in the Novel*, 33 (2), Summer 2001, pp.202-223. Downloaded 12.9.2018.

¹³⁵ Thomas Babington Macaulay's infamous 'Minute on Indian Education' that attempted to Anglicize Indians so that they became 'Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect'. In Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (London: Verso, 1983; reprinted 1991) pp. 90-93.

¹³⁶ Morey, op cit., p.138.

The tone is formal, heavy with the pedantry of judicial inquiry that characterizes those who can 'calibrate a continent but cannot see its heart' such is the complicity of discursive practices in producing colonial oppression' Bette London argues.¹³⁷ Procedural rules are meticulously adhered to, particularly the preliminaries of identification: Hari's name, current address, his next of kin – to which Hari answers with a toneless '*Han*'. Like the Indian peasants of Sir Herbert Risley's surveys, a fuller notion of personhood is of no consequence here.

But thence to the politically charged chain of events that bring Hari to the attention of the authorities. Rowan grills Hari on his father Duleep's ambitions for him to be a fully Anglicized Indian, his first encounters with Merrick in Sister Ludmilla's Sanctuary, his relationship with Pandit Bhaba, a known activist, the connection with Hari's drinking companions, still under lock and key, and his burgeoning love affair with Daphne Manners that culminates in Hari's arrest.

The stranger learns that the charges against Hari rest upon other records, if not records-upon-records, each purportedly a selection of summaries of evidence and depositions to which neither Hari nor the ethnographic stranger has ever had access. And Rowan conducts the interrogation according to strict frames of reference, whose moral, cultural and historical bases are obscure. Firstly, he insists on trying to pin down 'the order and time in which detenu alleges things were done and certain things said' for the record.¹³⁸ Note the archaic term 'detenu': undignified by any definite article, it objectifies the person to whom it refers by speaking around rather than naming him/her personally. The deliberate legalese is a calculated exercise in subjugation.

Moreover the outcome, it seems, is virtually spoken for in advance, an important theme which is repeated later by different characters throughout the tetralogy, such as Merrick's instructions to Perron when interviewing Indian National Army suspects.¹³⁹ So, Rowan quells any objections from Gopal to extend the remit: 'if there was any inner significance it might be clearer if we confine ourselves rigorously to the 'outer forms' he insists.¹⁴⁰ The inquisitorial nature of questioning, pugnacious from the start, becomes increasingly so as Hari's testimony proceeds. Listen, for example, to the insistent yammering on the ear of the succession of 'I put it to you' ...', 'I put it to you ...' that runs down the page.¹⁴¹ They, at least, should be on record.

More questionable are the obscene details of Hari's torture, details that, according to Scott's biographer, Hilary Spurling, closely resemble those of T.E. Lawrence's

¹³⁷ Bette London, op. cit., p.93.

¹³⁸ *DSc*: p. 282.

¹³⁹ *DS*: p.252.

¹⁴⁰ *DSc*: p.292.

¹⁴¹ *DSc*: p.283 et seq.

ordeal in Dehra prison, reports of which had painfully affected him.¹⁴² So his ability to grasp a bestiality often inaudible to an ethnographic stranger preoccupied with the outer voice allows Scott to counter M. Keith Booker's argument that the specifics of imperial political power are masked in terms of human nature. Both inner and outer voice are at stake here.¹⁴³ As revelation succeeds revelation, including Hari's graphic account of being forced to bend naked over a trestle while Merrick smears his genitals with blood, it becomes clear that no proceedings can impugn the credibility of a senior British police officer, particularly where aberrant sexuality is concerned. 'It goes against the grain' for accusations to be made without Merrick being present to refute them, Rowan comments later.¹⁴⁴ Deaf to any irony at the time, Rowan orders the clerk to delete the revelations from the record and leave the room. Clearly Hari has been misled, not by the form but by the whole rationale for the enquiry, his voice press-ganged from his body 'in the service of the body politic' as Haswell puts it.¹⁴⁵

Whilst interrogator and detenu take stock, the only sounds to be heard are the crackle of Rowan's papers, and the 'puk-puk-puk' of the clerk's pen: homely sounds, perhaps, in the *Mayapore Gazette* office where Hari has once been employed with the job of eradicating any tell-tale signs of Indian authorship for the paper's British readers, symbolic of the *Raj*'s mission to 'guide and correct.'¹⁴⁶ Under the glaring light of the interrogation cell, though, the hard and soft consonants of crackle and splutter are heavy with dread and unanswered questions. A stranger can only surmise how thoroughly Rowan has sifted through the written piles of evidence beforehand. And when speech outpaces anyone's ability to translate more than its outlines into shorthand (not to mention the double translation back into written text), how can a stranger ensure that the clerk has not missed a point? There is no jury to debate a verdict, no legal representative to speak on Hari's behalf, no public gallery to play to. In this way are records compiled, inconvenient facts removed, monological authority assured.

Which brings me to 'that little matter of the colour of Hari's skin.'¹⁴⁷ Racism is usually referred to as a language that 'thinks with its eyes not its ears', an obsession with the racialized gaze that 'anchors human difference in the visible' and runs like a leitmotif throughout colonial literature.¹⁴⁸ Scott deliberately

¹⁴² Hilary Spurling, op cit., p.343.

¹⁴³ M. Keith Booker, quoted in Haswell, op cit., (2002), p.224.

¹⁴⁴ *DS*: p.305.

¹⁴⁵ Haswell, op cit., (2001), p.218.

¹⁴⁶ Childs, op cit., p.57.

¹⁴⁷ *JC*: p. 63. A reference to Edwina Crane and her relationship with her Indian teacher, Mr. Chaudhuri. See Appendix 1.

¹⁴⁸ Michael Bull and Les Back (eds), op cit., p.14.

complicates such a claim, at first obliquely and then directly to disrupt simplistic divisions between colonizer and colonized.

Consider, for example, the sound of Hari's voice. Not simply a matter of language, although the question of which tongue to speak in arises early in the proceedings with Hari's interjection, 'I beg your pardon', a reference to the easy entitlement he once enjoyed, before explaining 'I seldom have the opportunity of speaking English to anyone except myself.'¹⁴⁹ So, the interrogation is conducted in English, not the 'lesser' *lingua franca* of Hindustani that Hari can barely speak.

But the stranger is thinking about tone as well as tongue. To find an Indian talking without the derogatory 'babu-Indian' inflection is a shock for the interrogation panel who are anticipating the customary Indian cadences of speech. For example, such is Hari's command of Received Pronunciation that it is hard to tell the voices of Rowan and Hari apart, so similar in emphasis and intonation are they. So, the endless play on Hari's name that grates so on Merrick's ears - should the emphasis be on 'Kumar or Coomer?' 'Hari' or 'Harry' - is not easily dismissed. How is one to justify imprisoning a detainee who is incoherent, if not mute in his mother tongue? Or, more confusingly still, one who went to the same public school as Rowan?

Other betrayals are closer to Hari's new home. If Rowan is unsympathetic to their commonalities of background, the stranger finds Gopal outwardly indignant on Hari's behalf, but inwardly hostile to what is surely Hari's attempt to mimic a white rhetoric to which he has no claim. Such antipathy between Indians and 'Eurasians' was hardly new, but in conditions of political and economic instability such as these, it acquired a harsher edge, apparent not just to the British but deeply entrenched in Indian consciousness too.¹⁵⁰ Hence Gopal's Kiplingesque references made earlier to Rowan about 'the folly of combining a brown skin with an English voice.'¹⁵¹ The argument that develops between the two inquisitors, with Gopal insisting that Rowan's restriction of the enquiry to Hari's political affiliations, is largely a smokescreen. 'The evidence is rigged' he objects, 'the whole thing stinks.'¹⁵²

But what about the voice from above? Consider the subtle way in which Scott has woven the elevated presence of Lady Manners into the interrogation to cast more authoritative doubt on any simplistic notion of the racialized gaze. At first there is just the odd reminder of her presence, a 'she' inserted into the text, or a reference

¹⁴⁹ *DSc*: p.244.

¹⁵⁰ The antipathy is illustrated in Charles Allen's captivating oral history, *Plain Tales from the Raj: Images of British India in the 20th Century*. (First published London: Andre Deutsch, 1975; reprinted London: Abacus, 1994), pp.218-219.

¹⁵¹ *DSc*: p.279.

¹⁵² *DSc*: p.277.

to the way she repeatedly fingers the pearl buttons on her blouse, perhaps for reassurance. Then listen to the unfolding vocal line until her commentary is as central to the moral orchestration of the enquiry as is Rowan's official voice. Gopal's 'hectoring tone of voice', she observes, betrays his real allegiance, his contempt for a countryman from whom he is permanently estranged.

It was the white man in Kumar he enjoyed attacking, even as he wanted to voice his outrage to the Indian in Hari that had suffered ...¹⁵³

That racism, particularly inverse racism, is too complex to be grasped simply by the eye clearly reflects Scott's own moral voice. One needs to sense it, feel it, above all hear it as if with one's inner ear, not just observe it from a fixed distance. Gorra puts his finger on the problem: 'which does one believe, the colour of the skin or the voice' he asks.¹⁵⁴ Contrary to the Western stranger's commitment to either/or binaries, he goes on: 'What if there is no necessary contradiction between the two: the colour of the skin disavows the voice, but then the voice disavows the skin?' – as though they might occur simultaneously, not sequentially.

The following passage is illustrative. Any dissonance between the two disappears at the point when Lady Manner asks Rowan via the intercom to tell Hari of Daphne's death. Sight and sound are no longer estranged from one another but merge in the following beautifully composed vocal line.

At first sight she did not detect it – there was no sound of it, no sign of it – except (and now she saw it) this curious unemotional expulsion from the deep-set eyes of rivulets, opaque in the glaring light that coursed down his cheeks in the glaring light like phosphorescent rails ... There had never been any expression of grief. No one had ever cried for Daphne except herself.¹⁵⁵

Such is the power of the image that she yearns to reach out and touch Hari. As Simmel's stranger reminds us, objectivity does not mean non-participation.¹⁵⁶ Impossible, of course, given the framework of the interrogation, but that gesture symbolises the failure of the *Raj* to unify a disparate continent that Scott diagnosed as the blight lying at the heart of Britain's occupation of India and its indecently hasty departure.¹⁵⁷ So, the harmony is only momentary. Sound, as always, gives way to the assumed primacy of sight, and the inexpressibility of suffering, at least for the record. The clerk's record, the stranger is told, will show only the 'clinical pursuit of justice'.

¹⁵³ *DSc*: p.292.

¹⁵⁴ Gorra, op cit., p.40.

¹⁵⁵ *DSc*: p.301.

¹⁵⁶ Simmel, op cit., p.145.

¹⁵⁷ See Childs, op cit., p.112 on this point.

So far, I've emphasised how everything conspires to cleanse the record of impurities and distance Hari from adherence to the rudiments of justice under the rule of law. But the balance of power in any interrogation is potentially mutable, alert to the way an inquisitor needs his/her subject just as a persecutor needs his/her victim. Scott brilliantly conveys the shifting sands of oppression by varying the enquiry's tempo and rhythm. The pace quickens at one moment where Rowan and Hari are engaged in staccato question and answer. Consider Rowan's incredulity at the spectacle of a man who is more disturbed by his own plight as an emigre on returning to India, than that of his close countrymen suffering under colonial rule.

Rowan: You did not look around you and think – 'these are my people. This is my country. I must work to free them of the foreign yoke that wears them down'?

Hari: I wanted nothing more than to go home.

Rowan: Home to England?

Kumar: Yes.¹⁵⁸

He volunteers no further explanation, but the sense of estrangement is palpable. At other moments, the tempo slows. More rounded questioning from Rowan seems to allow Hari's voice to be heard in reply, for example his attempt to elaborate on the sense of alienation he feels with the admission that he could 'never exactly mirror the English who in India, become so self-consciously English'.¹⁵⁹ Even with Duleep's exemplary coaching, the fact that Hari never managed to achieve perfect pitch is a brilliant piece of irony on Scott's part.

A stranger might object at this juncture. Surely a man who has been in solitary confinement for two years with only his inner voice for company will stutter and stumble under such crossfire? On the contrary, such is the authority with which Hari parries Rowan's questions that it is as though he has just emerged, freshly wigged and gowned from the Inns of Court. Deaf to such discordant notes at the time, it only occurs to Rowan later that here is the classic example of an ethnographic stranger, a man thinking on his feet, trying to anticipate the drift of the proceedings,

... searching his memory for certain details to convince himself of the reality of the things he knew had happened to him but preferred not to think about. It was the manner in which he answered the questions that first alerted

¹⁵⁸ *DSc*: p.250.

¹⁵⁹ *DSc*: p.255.

Rowan to the possibility that the documents he had studied, and which were so damning to Kumar were not going to stand up.¹⁶⁰

So, something more immediate – another voice, another instrument - is needed for an ethnographic stranger to be aware of the changing dynamics of oppression. Accordingly, the emphasis of the interrogation suddenly alters, bringing with it a change in emotional resonance. Such is the sharpness of Scott's critique at this point that Hari's testament is worth dwelling upon at some length. In four pages of virtually unbroken text that leave Rowan and Gopal silent, Hari's inner voice is suddenly liberated. Significantly, 'his' voice, Scott writes, becomes 'the voice' and Lady Manners closes her eyes, whether to distance herself from its source or lose herself in the purity of its sound is left to the stranger's imagination.

Of course, Hari is ideally placed to make sense of the link between personal predicament and public issue. No other stranger has been so close to Merrick that Hari has not only learnt to think like Merrick about what he calls 'The Situation' but to think along with Merrick, whilst not necessarily agreeing with him. The perfect ethnographer, in fact. Using the intimate brutalities of his torture, and lengthy reflection in solitary confinement, Hari can expose what the real Situation is, namely living the lie of Britain's civilizing mission that has been enacted in all its specificity in his prison cell. He can testify to the panel what Merrick has taught him: how the pretence of equality and respect between Britain and India always conceals the primal emotions of contempt on his side and fear on Hari's, a contempt that is as visible in white liberals who 'pretended to admire Indian intellectuals' as it is in 'the upper-class reactionary who kicks the fellow who blacks his boots.'¹⁶¹

In all its hear-and-now immediacy, such 'wicked clarity' makes Scott's analysis as 'damning as anything in the literature of resistance', Gorra suggests.¹⁶² A bleak view of the human condition, leaving little room for an ethic of care between people, or the love of a land that Scott felt himself, attachments which are often dismissed as nostalgia, at least of the cliched 'swank and swagger' kind.¹⁶³

Such was the shock of hearing matters laid out so close to the bone that I almost missed the real twist that is an important clue to Scott's own moral stance. It occurs in Hari's further elaboration of Merrick's sermon:

¹⁶⁰ DS: p.150.

¹⁶¹ DSc: p.304.

¹⁶² Gorra, op cit., p.53

¹⁶³ Benita Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries: India in the British Imagination 1800-1930*. (London: Verso, 1998), p.67. She ferrets out a few more positive examples in her study of earlier writings about the *Raj* but argues that the trend was always negative. A stranger might wonder, though, what it was about such atypical narratives that allowed them to flourish at all in a climate that is universally condemned as morally bankrupt.

He said that history was a sum of situations whose significance was never seen until long afterwards because people had been afraid to act them out. They couldn't face up to their responsibility for them. They preferred to think of the situation they found themselves in as part of a general drift of events they had no control over, which meant that they never really understood those situations, and so in a curious way, the situations did become part of a general drift of events. He didn't think he could go so far as to say you could change the course of events by acting out situations you found yourself in, but that at least you'd understand better what the situation was and take what steps you could to stop things drifting in the wrong direction or in an unreal direction ...¹⁶⁴

The passage represents a cool exposition of one of Scott's most important ideas about the moral drift of history, an idea gleaned from Ralph Waldo Emerson, echoes of which can be found in Scott's *Essays*.¹⁶⁵ By this he was referring to the way in which each person contributes to that history, however minimally, every day with every movement.¹⁶⁶ A pragmatic voice, then, one that arises from the realities of engaging directly with a refractory world that a 'Western' ethnographer can instantly recognize. But doubts as to its tempering effects must arise when ideas such as these emerge from a confirmed racist. What did 'drifting in the wrong direction' mean for a man such as Merrick who was an active participant in quelling the Quit India movement riots and beyond? Scott leaves the question unanswered.

Which brings me to the interrogation's finale – an astonishing Emersonian moment of self-reliance from a young man whose only distinction to date has been to play cricket well. We hear Hari using Merrick's logic but subtly subverting it to his own purposes, ending the 'colonial complicity in his own degradation' as Gorra nicely puts it.¹⁶⁷ Rejecting any hint of subservience to Daphne's fateful decision and refusing to accept a responsibility that was not his for the five comrades detained with him he recalls that moment of near capitulation to an officer who thought of himself naturally as racially superior.¹⁶⁸

I was not the only one with rights. I wasn't to be classified, compared, directed, dealt with. Nothing except people's laws had any claim on me and I hadn't broken any laws ... I wasn't to be categorized or defined by type, colour, race, capacity, intellect, condition, belief, instincts, manner or behaviour. Whatever kind of poor job I was in my own eyes, I was Hari Kumar – and the situation about Hari Kumar was that there was no one

¹⁶⁴ *DSc*: p.306.

¹⁶⁵ See for example *MAM*, op cit., p.145.

¹⁶⁶ *MAM*, op cit., pp.145 and 158.

¹⁶⁷ Gorra, op cit., p.55.

¹⁶⁸ Gorra, *ibid*.

anywhere exactly like him. So, who had the right to destroy me? ... The answer was nobody. No one had any rights over me...There wasn't anyone I was answerable to except myself.¹⁶⁹

Neither Merrick nor Rowan have any more hold over him. What he calls 'The Situation' can 'only exist on Merrick's terms if we both took part in it'.¹⁷⁰ Even under the most brutalizing of circumstances, some detachment is possible by refusing to become Merrick's adornment in the way that India under the Raj has often been imagined by the British. Not one of Dostoevsky's piano keys, he will continue to say nothing – for the record.¹⁷¹ Then the swift reversal that Scott enjoys playing with. 'The voice' becomes Hari's voice again, 'alert, detached, and ironical. I've said it all. The clerk wasn't here to record'.¹⁷²

The continual switching of voices in this unofficial interrogation that makes Scott's voice so hard to pin down - between Rowan and Gopal, Rowan and Lady Manners, 'the' voice and Hari's voice - can best heard as the provocation that was intended. The stranger leaves Scott's protagonists searching for a valid record that they realize they have been complicit in orchestrating themselves, questions that continue to echo later, much later, in Perron's own imagination.¹⁷³ That Hari's voice carries the ring of truth is increasingly obvious, Scott tells us, although it leaves Rowan and Lady Manners with only the 'uncorroborated evidence of a prisoner'.¹⁷⁴ Hari's accusations about Merrick could simply be the play of fantasy.

Yet those matter-of-fact revelations about Merrick's brutality continue to reverberate in Rowan's mind.¹⁷⁵ No one could have fabricated the difficulties of breathing when bent double over a trestle as Hari has done without experiencing it at first hand, he muses. And for Gopal, even an expurgated version of the record represents a step in the right direction. No one, not even the nameless clerk, can un-hear what has been said. Almost forgotten is the way that sound carries. Words spoken in another time and place can cross borders that bodies cannot, even when all other physical traces have been obliterated, Julia Obert notes.¹⁷⁶

Above all, nothing can silence Lady Manners' despair. Merrick will never be brought to justice, Hari's authorial voice is irrecoverable, the record in all its intrusiveness and over-simplification a charade to be filed away along with

¹⁶⁹ *DSc*: p.312.

¹⁷⁰ *DSc*: p.306.

¹⁷¹ Dostoevsky, Fyodor, *Notes from Underground*. (1859) Translated and edited Michael R. Katz. (New York: W. W. Norton and Co, 1989) p.22.

¹⁷² *DSc*: p.314.

¹⁷³ *DS*: p.248 et seq.

¹⁷⁴ *DSc*: p.317.

¹⁷⁵ *DS*: p.342 et seq.

¹⁷⁶ Julia C. Obert, *Postcolonial Overtures: The Politics of Sound in Contemporary Northern Irish Poetry*. (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2015), p.15.

countless others, sound-proofed against doubt. A Wagnerian note of foreboding creeps into her conversation with Rowan in the car afterwards: 'It will end in total and unforgiveable disaster' she predicts. '**That** is the Situation'.

The interrogation ends on an almost mystical note, with her voice soaring above the tragedy she has been ear and eyewitness to:

We must remember the worst because the worst is the lives we lead, the best is only our history, and between our history and our lives there is this vast dark plain where the rapt and patient shepherds drive their invisible flocks in expectation of God's forgiveness.¹⁷⁷

A moment of intellectual recklessness on Scott's part that supports Benita Parry's charge of spiritualism. It is also, I suggest, a respite from the intense pressure of statement, counter-statement and refutation in the interrogation room below.¹⁷⁸ Contrary to the insistence of dedicated historical materialists such as Peter Childs, the appeal to metaphysics is never absent from his work.¹⁷⁹

So, what of Hari, Scott's fictional 'loose end'? Reaching a definitive conclusion about the nature of individual responsibility for what becomes collective injustice is always difficult. Is 'the voice's' resistance to being interrogated by a stranger an example of 'the sacred integrity of your own mind' and a rejection of conformity that Emerson advocated?¹⁸⁰ Or does it link Hari to the Hindu notion of *sannyasi* that implies an abnegation of moral responsibility to the world according to the Hindu code's final stage of life – a renunciation that is superficially akin to the accusations levelled at liberal humanists' withdrawal from social reality?¹⁸¹

In the *Quartet*, Hari is left to eke out his days as an outcast on the wrong side of the Mayapore Bridge, there under the pseudonym of Philoctetes to compose his 'In memoriam' to the sights, sounds and scents of England for the *Ranpur Gazette*.¹⁸² It is tempting to interpret this as a lament, the result of being trapped without a voice between two cultures from which he is doubly estranged.¹⁸³ Certainly, Jenny Sharpe's critique that Hari's impassioned aria fails to interrogate the authority of

¹⁷⁷ *DSc*: p.315.

¹⁷⁸ See Appendix 2, footnote 457.

¹⁷⁹ Childs, *op.cit.*, p.33. Other historians, such as David Rubin disagree, *op. cit.*, p.120.

¹⁸⁰ Emerson, *op cit.*, p.25.

¹⁸¹ Superficially it refers to a vow of complete renunciation, a withdrawal from engagement with the world. See <http://www.brittanica.com/topic/sannyasi>.

¹⁸² The archer and friend of Hercules who was abandoned by his comrades returning from the Trojan Wars on the island of Lemnos as they could not tolerate the stench from his wound. (See Weinbaum, *op cit.*, p.142). It is worth noting that Philoctetes was eventually accepted back into the fold.

¹⁸³ *JC*: p.457.

the official Anglo-Indian rhetoric is troubling.¹⁸⁴ And as Tharoor notes: 'Mute suffering is all very well as a moral principle, but it has rarely brought about meaningful change'.¹⁸⁵

However, these critiques may offer an unrealistically heroic model of wilful striving. In a review of different forms of acceptance and resilience, Jackson, argues that stoic notions of endurance and endurance 'are no less modes of agency than wilful striving'.¹⁸⁶ The Westernized notion of human capacity as long-term strategic action that surmounts obstacles in pursuit of a goal may not resonate with Indian notions of toil and suffering. Self-expression may be less important than holding one's tongue.

But true to the *duende* that keeps his moral voice alive, Scott continues to play with the record of Hari and Merrick's encounters. Accordingly, his later play '*The Situation*' is more robust. It enacts a direct confrontation between Hari and Lady Manners, where Hari insists 'I like it here. I get on well, I give no trouble. I want nothing from you', disclaiming any connection with Daphne or Parvati. The British offer of friendship is too late.¹⁸⁷ In Simmel's terms, he is 'another person', free from entanglements.¹⁸⁸ Like the raga itself, the attempt to fix a principled moral stance – for the record - goes on and on. Interrogating the interrogation is never settled.

Daphne's *Sannyasi*

The significance for Scott's voice of Hari's refusal to cast himself in Merrick's terms can be enhanced by comparing it with Daphne's own record of their relationship and subsequent 'in-house' enquiry after the rape that takes the form of a lengthy journal. Labelled formally 'Daphne Manners (Journal addressed to Lady Manners), Kashmir, April 1943', it occupies roughly one fifth of the length of *The Jewel in the Crown*.¹⁸⁹ Significantly it is recorded under the chapter heading, 'The Bibighar Gardens' and is placed at the end of the book to evoke the threnody that runs through the whole tetralogy, as will become apparent in my own chapter 4. When journals often circulate long after they have been written, accumulating meaning as they travel, Daphne's journal is passed to her aunt, Lady Chatterjee, who in turn passes part of it on to Robin White, and thence to Guy Perron, Scott's official ethnographic stranger who arrives to conduct his research in the 1960s.

Like an ethnographer's fieldnotes, Daphne's journal is a mix of both diary and *aide-memoire*, indicative of Scott's ability to enter imaginatively into the mind of a young

¹⁸⁴ Sharpe, op cit.p.145-147.

¹⁸⁵ Tharoor, op cit., p.243.

¹⁸⁶ Michael Jackson, *Existential Anthropology: Events, Exigencies and Effects*. (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005), p.xxxi.

¹⁸⁷ Spurling, op cit., p361.

¹⁸⁸ Simmel, op cit.p.144.

¹⁸⁹ pp.373-468 in my edition..

girl who, had she remained in England, might have found herself at a Swiss finishing school, her journal recorded in *The Tatler*. By any standard, it is an astonishing and moving *mea culpa*, a reflexive exercise in search of her own moral voice as probing in its honesty and clarity as is Hari's analysis of buggery at Merrick's hands in Kandipat jail. And more than that. As Morey notes, the journal 'becomes the kind of writing which, in itself, interrogates the processes and expediences of imperial governance'.¹⁹⁰

First, though, a few words about Daphne about whom I've said little to date. At first sight there is nothing distinctive about her. Here is a young girl out from England after the death of her parents to join Lady Manners, as was the custom for girls of her class and status in the 1940's. However, behind the outward appearance - that of a plain, awkwardly shaped woman, whose galumphing feet inadvertently trample over the *mali's* marigolds without and drown the soft pattering of servants' bare feet on the parquet floor within - one senses a courage and integrity of spirit that are not to be silenced by the written word. As Sister Ludmilla says of her:

There was a grace in her. And joy ... She did not divide conduct into parts. She was always attempting a wholeness ... Only there is living'.¹⁹¹

The circumstances in which she composes the journal between rape and birth are free from any visible coercion of the kind that Hari has just endured. Neither is it subject to the strict remit that Rowan demands earlier. But the relation between inner and outer voice has its own implicit demands, particularly in the close-knit Pankot cantonment from which she is now ostracised, such is the enormity of refusing to abort a mixed-race child. The urge to justify though, is irresistible. In refusing to become the kind of statistical datum routinely documented about 'the Indian peasant' in which their personhood becomes part of the wider culture of silence, she insists on writing on her own terms. She has left the mundane world in order to transcend it, 'rejecting and at the same time influencing it', as Dumont noted.¹⁹² This is her *sannyasi*. Prompted by the premonition that she is not going to survive the birth of her child, she is writing, she says,

... as an insurance against permanent silence ... because I have premonitions of not getting through and I should hate to kick the bucket knowing I'd made no attempt to set the record straight and break the silence we both seem to have agreed is okay for the living, if not for the dead.¹⁹³

Although these are necessarily second-order thoughts about 'what happened', the process of writing helps to order the dialogue between inner and outer voice, inner

¹⁹⁰ Morey, op cit., p.137.

¹⁹¹ *JC*: p.143.

¹⁹² Dumont, op cit., p.235

¹⁹³ *JC*: p.373.

voice and 'soul' in the way that Malinowski made sense of his fieldwork experience in the Trobriand Islands.¹⁹⁴ Like him, she finds solace in the activity: 'it is a way to have him with me again in a way that is more solid than unfettered recollection, but still insubstantial' she claims.¹⁹⁵ So, her testimony is arranged, un-dated, into sections, some short, others lengthy, to evoke a vivid memory here, a digression there, or snatches of conversation with others that evoke her growing affection for Hari and its tragic consequences. Of course, there are gaps and silences that cannot be accounted for, reminders of which appear in the twelve other accounts of Daphne's love affair and rape that regularly appear in the *Quartet*. For example, as she was hooded during the rape how could she tell whether one of the assailants was circumcised or not? But apart from two deliberately marked changes in tone which I will come to shortly, the journal reads as the proverbial stream of consciousness.

Indeed, no stranger could fail to be disarmed by the immediacy of her writing, as she begins the journal with an apology for 'all the trouble and embarrassment' she has caused.¹⁹⁶ When records are always written with some wider audience in mind, clearly Daphne is addressing Lady Manners in a way that also invites the reader to participate in what she is articulating, with such phrases as 'You would know, Auntie', or 'Do you remember Auntie, those dreams I wrote to you about once?'¹⁹⁷ The tone is respectful, tentative even, as she resorts to the familiar device of anticipating criticism the better to defend herself against it. Consider the repeated cautions along the way such as 'if you ever read this, I shan't be around to feel diminished by your criticism'.¹⁹⁸ Yet Scott's ear for the colloquialisms that were commonplace in her circle in the 1940's, such as Daphne's frequent references to 'bashing about' or 'driving me bats' add warmth and colour to her account and resonate strongly in this stranger's ear.

As she gains confidence, the tension in her account builds, the rhythm quickens. The ethnographic stranger accompanies her as she details her arrival in India, the homesickness she feels at first, then the welcome at the Macgregor House where she stays with her Eurasian aunt Lily Chatterjee, who holds 'open house' to both white and Indian guests, although, she notes ironically, 'the mixing was just as self-conscious as the segregation.'¹⁹⁹ Here Scott brings out how the play between intimacy and distance work create both a form of being together and almost simultaneously, one of being apart.²⁰⁰ For example, Daphne is aware of the seductive comfort of being with other girls of her own age at the Club, and the ease

¹⁹⁴ Malinowski, op cit., (1967), p.31.

¹⁹⁵ JC: p.397.

¹⁹⁶ JC: p.437.

¹⁹⁷ JC: p.383.

¹⁹⁸ JC: p.397.

¹⁹⁹ JC: p.404.

²⁰⁰ Simmel, op cit., p.144.

with which she used those 'little tricks of expression and gesture' whose significance never has to be spelt out. But the discovery that they have little in common with each other, 'except through force of circumstance' only amplifies her growing sense of estrangement from imperial life.²⁰¹

We've seen in the previous section how Scott plays with the tension between Hari's voice and the colour of his skin via Rowan, Lady Manners and, ironically, Gopal to complicate too simplistic divisions between colonizer and colonized. Nowhere is the continuing play between the two developed more sensitively than in Daphne's account of her burgeoning love affair with Hari which emphasizes what Haswell refers to as the thin-ness of both Rushdie's and Suleri's critique of white-girl-brown-man love affairs and rape as 'trite'.²⁰² And Gorra notes that Daphne is honest enough to see how close she comes to being a memsahib - the voice of an ethnographic stranger gone native.²⁰³ If not exactly *the* truth, there is a ring of truthfulness about her record that is faithful to Scott's own search for a principled moral stance in wishing to reach across strongly coded cultural boundaries.

The stranger hears about their first uneasy encounters, the uncertainties and clumsiness they both feel, the tense moral dilemmas that revolve around the colonial privilege enjoyed so naturally on Daphne's part and its absence on Hari's. For example, she can sense their mutual attraction to danger that draws them together, although hers is the dominant note so that she pursues Hari even when it is apparent that she has come too close.²⁰⁴

Most compelling of all is 'the curious, almost titillating *fear* of his colour', the terror of miscegenation, reminiscent of nineteenth century eugenicists' desire for racial purity that is still entrenched within 'Western' literary fiction and culture, as Benita Parry in her study of earlier writings about the *Raj* brilliantly illustrates.²⁰⁵ Listen to Daphne's little prick of conceit that her special love for Hari might surmount the well-worn trope of Indian men as effeminate. Whilst possessing a white girl 'could be a way of bolstering his ego', she writes, she has made a man of him.²⁰⁶ And here Scott's moral voice harmonizes with that of critics as diverse as Weinbaum²⁰⁷ and Suleri.²⁰⁸ It is not the feminizing of the Indian male that Daphne points to, but its neutering. We are given the image of a *hijra*, or *castrati* whose only voice is a *false* *setto*. Consider this passage in Daphne's journal:

²⁰¹ JC: p.384.

²⁰² Haswell, Janis, 'Images of Rape and Buggery: Paul Scott's View of the Dual Evils of Empire', *Studies in the Novel*, 33 (2), Summer 2001, 202-223.

²⁰³ Gorra, op cit., p.60.

²⁰⁴ JC: p.398.

²⁰⁵ Benita Parry, op. cit., 1998, pp.84-88.

²⁰⁶ JC: p.398.

²⁰⁷ Weinbaum, op cit., p.185.

²⁰⁸ Suleri, op cit., pp.16-17.

A white man in India can feel physically superior without unsexing himself ... But what happens to a woman if she tells herself that 99 per cent of the men she sees are not men at all, but creatures of an inferior species, whose colour is their main distinguishing mark. What happens when you unsex a nation, treat it like a nation of eunuchs? That's what we've done, isn't it?²⁰⁹

This is no conventional rape script of the kind that Rushdie and Jenny Sharpe objected to, but a powerful self-critical dialogue between inner and outer voice that rings true despite – or rather because of - the conventions of journal writing that allow her space and time to fashion herself.

So, the stranger follows Daphne's account of their stolen encounters in the Bibighar, the love scene where she feels whole once more as they lie together afterwards on the mosaic floor listening to the frogs croaking. And then the rape. Consider how skilfully Scott uses sensory imagery to articulate the moral dilemma in which they are both trapped afterwards as Hari silently gathers Daphne up in his arms and carries her to safety. But there is no safety for him. The stranger confronts not only the evident absurdity of admitting that a daughter of the Empire can be in love on equal terms with an Indian, but Hari's denial of any contact when he is later found by Merrick with bloody scratches on his face from his own struggle with her assailants that cannot be explained away. Crucially, the stranger is presented with the difficulty of knowing who is protecting whom, whose is the selfless act, Hari's (qua Haswell)²¹⁰ or Daphne's (qua Morey)?²¹¹

Note, though, that it is Daphne's decision, made intuitively in the panic of the moment that he is 'to say nothing ... you've been at home, you know nothing,' despite his protests, a promise that she reproaches herself for later when she discovers that Hari has taken her demands literally.²¹²

All I can think of now is the callous way I left him, to face up to everything alone, to say nothing, deny everything, with those scratches on his face that he couldn't account for. I never gave him the chance because even in my panic was this assumption of superiority, of believing I knew what was best for both of us because the colour of my skin automatically put me on the side of those who never told a lie.²¹³

So far, there has been little to doubt the presence and vitality of Daphne's authorial voice. Which brings me to the pivotal connection with the previous section, namely the clamour for official evidence from all sides, first from the elderly Indian Judge

²⁰⁹ JC: p.427.

²¹⁰ Haswell, op cit., (2001), p.205.

²¹¹ Morey, op cit., p.155.

²¹² JC: p. 436 and 451.

²¹³ JC: p.452.

Menan, inwardly sympathetic but outwardly detached, (Mr. Gopal in reverse), and then from Jack Poulson, the senior officer appointed by Robin White, the Deputy Commissioner, 'to handle the Manners case'. Neither can conceal their distaste for the whole enquiry.

Scott repeats the distancing strategy he used so skilfully in the previous section, the way that Hari's voice becomes 'the' voice in handling his own interrogation. In danger of finding herself objectified, estranged from herself, Daphne's voice suddenly changes. No longer a young woman confiding her most intimate thoughts and feelings to her imagined audience, her voice becomes expository in what Benita Parry refers to as 'Scott's all-purpose style'.²¹⁴ It is tempting to agree. In one sense Scott's work can be read as an archive on its own terms. But I think this ignores what lies behind the seemingly straightforward passage of *reportage* that follows. I have compressed what is a lengthier piece of reasoning in the book to emphasize how closely Scott's dense argumentative style both echoes and parodies the 'robotic judicial system' that is being enacted and recorded here.²¹⁵ Otherwise there would be little point in Scott's repeated reference to that specific image.

There are obvious danger points for Daphne. Question: What is she doing in the Bibighar of all places? Answer: She was looking for the garden's legendary ghosts she's heard about, 'a bit of a lark, really, typical of a silly blundering girl', just what her interlocutors expect of a young girl freshly out from England in a foreign country.²¹⁶ Question: Why will she not co-operate by identifying possible suspects down at the jail? Answer: 'You'd only have my word for it. Simply looking at them isn't a test of reliability in itself ... And anyway, they all look alike in the dark don't they'.²¹⁷ Question: Were there three, four, or five assailants? Answer: 'It all happened so suddenly. They came at me from behind' (with an aside to the stranger 'leaving room for a margin of error').²¹⁸ Question: Why is her bicycle standing outside Hari's house? Answer: 'There are only three possible explanations (which she enumerates), and only one is likely ... and this surely leads to the proposition that it has been planted.'²¹⁹ Question: if her head was covered with her cape, how does she know that one of her assailants isn't Hari? Answer: 'For all I know they could have been British soldiers with their faces blackened'.²²⁰ The words ricochet around the room such is the shock. And note how the language of 'proposition', 'reliability' or 'margin of error' is not that of a daughter of the *Raj*. Rather it is the voice of an ethnographic stranger, gauging

²¹⁴ Parry, *op cit.*, (1975), p.360.

²¹⁵ *JC*: p.427.

²¹⁶ *JC*: p.443.

²¹⁷ *JC*: p.456.

²¹⁸ *JC*: p.453.

²¹⁹ *JC*: p.447.

²²⁰ *JC*: p.457.

what is coming next, cleverly imitating her interlocutors' terminology and logic but ferreting out the weaknesses in their questioning, just as 'the' voice in Hari's interrogation tried to do. In the process, the tone of Daphne's journal has changed dramatically. Confession has become argument, and argument accusation.

No one can mistake the vitality of Scott's moral stance here, as Daphne goes on to link her own violation with 'The whole bloody affair of us in India.' Not just that she and Hari have been caught up in a 'white judicial robot that fails to protect the innocent or recognize its own raping'.²²¹ The British presence in India, itself a violation, has become explosive. Whatever moral or physical force it might once have had, she notes 'the moral thing had gone sour'.²²²

Then 'the' voice becomes Daphne's voice again, her moral commitment towards human connection with those who are different unshaken. That conviction is not simply the professional duty of a stranger who is passing through, collecting data for a monograph to translate back to an academic or policy audience at home. Nor, again, is it a lament for what the Empire in India could have been, as Parry and others have claimed.²²³ Rather it alerts readers to the constant play between intimacy and distance, familiarity and strangeness, that one has to hear and feel in action and interaction with people, not just observe as though from above. It is a way to confront our deepest fears and prejudices. As Daphne muses:

I'm sure this longing for security and peace is wrong and that we should extend our patience time and time again, almost right up to its breaking point, put ourselves out on a limb, dare other people to saw the limb off, whoever they are, black or white. But it isn't easy, is it?²²⁴

On the face of it a muscular commitment, reminiscent of Scott's own venture to Timmapuram which came too close for comfort. But Daphne's voice does not diminish the Other. Rather, in anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes' view, it is 'an act of solidarity...the work of recognition': it reaches out in a way that is humanitarian and relational.²²⁵ Even Michael Gorra is moved to tears by her lack of self-pity, her self-knowledge, and the questions that always underpin what Scott called 'the moral continuum of human affairs': the many counterfactuals that turn Daphne and Hari's – and India's – involvement with each other from a relation of love and reciprocity to one of exploitation and brutality.²²⁶

²²¹ Haswell, op cit., (2002), p.153.

²²² *JC*: p.427.

²²³ Parry, op cit., (1975).

²²⁴ *JC*: p.106.

²²⁵ Nancy Scheper-Hughes, 'The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropologist.' *Current Anthropology*, June 1995, (36), 3, pp.409-440.

²²⁶ Gorra, op cit, p.60.

The journal tapers off at this point reminding readers again of Scott's dislike of the apparent finality of records. Daphne is left to face her own death 'with India in her belly' as the stranger remarked earlier.²²⁷ Like Lady Manners, she leaves us with that beautiful, but gnostic, passage with which I began this dissertation:

Behind all the chatter and violence of India – what a deep, lingering silence. Siva dances in it. Vishnu sleeps in it. Even their music is silence...²²⁸

Reprise

In these two cases, I've shown how Scott's fictional characters engaged with the process of recording the record and interrogating the interrogation, practices that were intended to secure equity, fairness and autonomy under the rule of law. In confounding and complementing sight, sound, intimacy and distance Scott deftly enables us to hear the how and not just the what that have come to be both weapons of power and instruments of transformation under the *Raj*. In fact, if we listen hard enough, Scott shows how the whole process of judicial and semi-judicial inquiry and recording *in camera* is a metaphor for the British presence in India, how complicit the British often were in the process of oppression whilst justifying it as part of their 'ethical competence to rule'.²²⁹

Of course, Hari's unofficial trial is a travesty. The process of documenting his account threatens to obliterate the very voice it was intended to extract. But not quite. Scott has successfully complicated any notion of records as simply instruments of oppression legitimating imperial governance – and Scott could not have been unaware of the significance of being undocumented. Neither are records necessarily 'a text for forgetting' as Jenny Sharpe argues.²³⁰ Hari's refusal to be interrogated further speaks to the power of the human voice to resist even under the most brutal conditions, a moral tension that haunts Scott's writings and one to which I will return in the conclusions. And we can hear the transformative power of Daphne's voice as she records her thoughts and feelings in her journal, not that of a victim who has ceded her moral agency and power of speech to the Big White Man. As Haswell insists, for both Hari and Daphne, 'their versions of the truth ... will be heard despite the myriad forces weighing against them.'²³¹ Indeed, I share the view of critics such as Nancy Scheper-Hughes,²³² Peter Childs²³³ and

²²⁷ *JC*: p.165.

²²⁸ *JC*: p.468.

²²⁹ See John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press (1992) who explore the role of inscription 'in the making of ideology and argument.' (In Riles op cit.,) p.10.

²³⁰ Jenny Sharpe, op cit., p.147.

²³¹ Haswell, op cit., (2001), p.216.

²³² Scheper-Hughes, op cit., p.418.

²³³ Childs, op cit., p.59.

Theodore Steinberg.²³⁴ Scheper-Hughes argues ‘Not to look, not to listen, not to record can be a hostile act, an act of indifference, and of turning away’.

It is Scott’s moral commitment towards the future ethnographic stranger that also emerges from this account of recording the record. As Childs noted earlier, it indicates how carefully Scott

tuned in to the difficulties of creating a version of Britain’s colonial legacy that will inevitably affect how others will hear and respond to his novels. There is no other way to evoke the nuances that escape the written document other than through constant testing of the self through the other person and vice versa. A man of his times, he knew that his own voice was an inevitable part of the imperial imaginary.

Yet no reputable study of the process of recording the records ends without a note of doubt. Not quite the same as ambiguity: ambivalence implies an active scepticism, ambiguity an inability to make up one’s mind. There is always more to tell, such is the role of the ethnographic stranger. All one can do is to get as close to ‘the’ truth as possible – to get things if not right, then at least not badly wrong.

This will become clearer in the next chapter as we follow Scott’s search for a moral stance in the way that family duties are articulated and enacted in the events leading up to the dissolution of the *Raj*.

²³⁴ Steinberg, op cit., especially pp. 142-5.

CHAPTER 3: PERFORMING FAMILY DUTIES

*Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles.*²³⁵

This chapter continues the search for Scott's moral stance to explore the ideal of family duty: how it was lived out in practice, sometimes with warmth and affection, at others, bent and perverted under imperial rule. Scott used the term family literally and metaphorically: literally to refer to the ideal white upper middle-class military and patriarchal family of 1940s colonial Britain as exemplified by the Laytons; and metaphorically to signify the *Raj* as an extended family. Hence Scott's ironic reference to Britain's 'imperial embrace' of British India.²³⁶

The term duty, whose European roots can be found in the Lockean notion of tutelage, is similarly literal and figurative. However, under imperial rule, a specific form of duty, known at the time as '*ma-bap*' is at stake here.²³⁷ Loosely translated as 'I am your Mother and Your Father', it referred not only to the highly prized form of solidarity within the British Army, but also to the British image of themselves as a 'hard-working, sacrificing people who are doing their duty to their subjects under adverse circumstances'.²³⁸ In fact, the ideal of service – to one's family, to the Regiment, to the Empire – was the defining musical score of British rule in India, part of its civilizing mission which must be protected, and one that necessarily called for a child-like adherence to those it ruled.²³⁹ Janis Haswell views it as the

... traditional military bond of sharing the white man's salt, the age-old exchange of guidance and devotion between an officer and enlisted man, and, by extension, between the white superior and inferior childlike subject ...²⁴⁰

a symbolic currency that Gandhi successfully adopted and subverted in his famous Salt March of 1930 against the British monopoly and tax on salt.

Gandhi's was not the only dissenting voice. The credibility of the civilizing mission in the 1940s was increasingly threatened by an invading Japanese imperial army from without as well as the clamour of the Quit India Movement from within. Although the Indian National Army (hereafter INA) was not strategically important

²³⁵ One of Scott's favourite Emersonian aphorisms. Quoted in *TS*, op cit., p.194.

²³⁶ *JC*: p.9.

²³⁷ This is often referred to erroneously as '*man-bap*' as D.C.R. Goonetilleke, op cit., p.804 notes. Given Scott's command of Urdu, it is perhaps surprising that neither he nor his critics have noticed this.

²³⁸ Allen J. Greenberger, *The British Image of India: A Study in the Literature of Imperialism*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.71.

²³⁹ See, for example, Benita Parry (1998), op cit., pp. 35-77; or Shamsul Islam, *Chronicles of the Raj: A Study of Literary Reaction to the Imperial Idea Towards the End of the Raj*, (London: The Macmillan Press, 1979), pp. 2-4.

²⁴⁰ Janis Haswell, (2002) op cit. p.87.

from a military standpoint, both D.C.R Goonetilleke²⁴¹ and Haswell²⁴² note that the British were baffled by the figure of the Indian sepoy who defected to the INA often under torture by the Japanese. Understandably defection was incomprehensible to those who had lost a son, a brother or a father working as a prisoner of war for the Japanese on the Burmese railroads. But how was it that India's Sikhs, Punjabis and Pathans who had been given a modest career structure out of village poverty into the British Army in return for their loyalty during the 'Mutiny' could be so ungrateful? John Lennard even suggests that such a betrayal resonated with the division of the Continent itself, 'destroying the bonds both within and between the INA and Indian and Anglo-Indian Society'.²⁴³ Contributory perhaps. It is well known that relations between the latter were endlessly precarious.²⁴⁴

Duty held both personal and wider philosophical connotations for Scott. On a personal level, it touched on his own obsession with the redemptive power of work as a vocation, an act of love that transformed both the object or ideal worked upon and the worker him/herself, a notion that Haswell views as one of the key unifying themes of his novels.²⁴⁵ Indeed, Scott writes powerfully about:

... the importance of engaging /oneself/ honourably, not in conflict as conflict, or for conflict's sake, but in work or acts that are not ... completely selfish ... and which must be serviceable to mankind.²⁴⁶

To be sure a privileged position not shared by most of the Indian population over whom the *Raj* ruled. But service does not necessarily have to be servile.

Moreover, as I noted in chapter 1 Scott had served in Malaya, Assam and India during the War, and had developed a keen ear for the Army's military mystique. Army life both fascinated and appalled him.²⁴⁷ There he had known the intimacy of *ma-bap* with his havaldir, Dass, articulating its hierarchies of privilege and prestige first in his semi-autobiographical novel, '*Johnny Sahib*' and then, as we've seen, in his unsuccessful bid to equalize relations between himself and Dass at Timmapuram two decades later.²⁴⁸

It is hardly surprising, then, that the fear of disloyalty became central to Scott's understanding of this aspect of imperial dissolution. His letters refer to his 'revulsion' from the one encounter he had with an INA soldier. Whether this was a result of the desertion *per se*, or by what the officer said of the Japanese treatment

²⁴¹ D.C.R. Goonetilleke, op cit., pp.804-5.

²⁴² Haswell, (2002) op cit., p.264.

²⁴³ John Lennard, op cit., p.97.

²⁴⁴ Suleri, op cit., p.2, and 6.

²⁴⁵ Haswell, (2002), op cit., p. 35, 54, 87.

²⁴⁶ *MAM* op cit., pp, 100, 117-8, 138, 143.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.35, 37.

²⁴⁸ Paul Scott, *Johnny Sahib*. (London: Viking Press, 1957).

of him, or – a double betrayal – by the failure of senior British officers to protect their Indian sepoy is unclear.²⁴⁹ When he returned to India in 1964 and again in 1969 his enquiries were met by a wall of silence and he was refused entry both to the Red Fort where the post-war show trials were held,²⁵⁰ and to the INA records in Delhi.²⁵¹ His letters express his frustration:

... at the lack of good accounts of the INA even though I've read fairly widely into the history ... I've found Indians very reluctant to discuss it ... the reluctance interested me almost as much, if not more, than the archives would have done.²⁵²

This was not a silence whose meanings go without saying between those who are intimate enough not to have to spell everything out, but a hostile silence, fortified against inquisitive strangers. Simmel overplayed his hand in emphasizing an ethnographic stranger's ability to move about.²⁵³ Movement is often tightly constrained.

Finally, in one of his most evocative essays, 'Meet the Author: Manchester' Scott links the betrayal by (and of) the INA soldier with two broader politico-philosophical issues: firstly, his dismay at the post-war nihilism that reflected the absence of meaningful work and purpose which he so valued; and secondly, the failure of liberal humanism to live up to its ideals of human dignity, integrity and decency in action which he saw as the tragedy of Britain's occupation.²⁵⁴ India, he thought was a mausoleum that held together

... the remains of the last two great senses of public duty we had as a people ... the sense of duty that was part and parcel of having an empire and the sense of duty so many of us felt that to get rid of it was the liberal human thing to do.²⁵⁵

A chirpy phrase 'getting rid of it', perhaps indicating that Scott is silencing and naturalizing imperialism by representing it in terms of 'nothing more than a burden and a terrible responsibility', as Nicholas Dirks remarks.²⁵⁶ But this is too

²⁴⁹ Haswell, (Volume 2), op cit., Scott's letter to J.A.E. Heard, 8th October 1975, p.264.

²⁵⁰ The defendants were symbolically a Sikh, a Hindu and a Muslim who, though found guilty, were released after the trial. The new government was faced with the impossible task of trying thousands of men. In Lennard, op cit., p.97.

²⁵¹ He made extensive efforts to check the historical facts: see letter to Dr. Pratul Chandra Gupta, Department of History, Jadavpu University, Calcutta, 22nd April 1967. See also Haswell op cit., (Volume 2), p.47; and Robin Moore, op cit., pp 82-4, 114-5. He was pleased to receive a letter from General Mohan Singh saying 'how much he appreciated this English attempt to convey the INA situation fairly'. Letter to Francine Weinbaum, April 14th 1976. In Weinbaum, op cit., p.214.

²⁵² In Haswell, (2002) op cit., p.264, letter to Mr. Heard.

²⁵³ Simmel, op. cit.

²⁵⁴ *MAM*, op cit., pp. 39-49.

²⁵⁵ *ibid.*, pp 48-9.

²⁵⁶ Dirks, op cit., (2006), p.332.

precipitate. It was the conflict between these principles, ‘those tender conspiracies of silence between a policy and its pursuits’, Scott felt, that contributed to Britain’s shoddy exit in 1947.²⁵⁷ Just like the ethnographic stranger, the Indian soldier of the time embodied Bauman’s classic question of undecidability: ‘Whose side are you on?’ As Merrick is to note later, the question of loyalty is not easily answered.²⁵⁸

To understand the significance of *Ma-bap* for the development of Scott’s moral voice, then, it is not enough to decide what the ideal bond between officer and men should have been under the *Raj*. We need to ask how Scott’s fictional characters variously addressed the call of a concept that a stranger today might find not only anachronistic,²⁵⁹ but grotesquely patronizing.²⁶⁰ How far did the preoccupation with morality as rights, adherence to rules and auditability translate into un-thinking obedience to what Sarah Layton calls ‘the bloody Code’?²⁶¹ Or had the *Raj* always failed to understand morality as involving more intimate relationships and obligations than can be catalogued in a code of ethics? Or were the two so intricately intertwined in practice that any attempt to disentangle them is unhelpful?

I’ll suggest that listening carefully to the conflicts, doubts and perversions of an ideal such as *ma-bap* shows how difficult it is to render an unequivocal moral account of our actions, in turn raising questions about its adherence by Scott’s fictional protagonists as being necessarily condescending or inauthentic. As Michael Jackson argues, ‘we can neither grasp all the factors that compel us to act in one way or another, neither can we know the consequences of what we do, even when acting in good faith’.²⁶² For Scott, whatever the importance of ‘sticking your neck out, so your novel will say something,’ there is always a residue, a puzzle, a mystery to unsettle the simple binaries – traitor and hero, wounded and wounded, rule-adherer and rule-breaker - that a linear rendering of ‘*ma-bap*’ common in ethnographic and historical documents of the time provides.²⁶³

So, let me return to Scott’s fictional rendering of *ma-bap* and thence to my two chosen settings to deepen our understandings of Scott’s moral voice raised earlier in M.M. Mahood’s elegantly argued paper.²⁶⁴ The demands of family duty crop up repeatedly in the *Quartet*: from Mildred Layton’s steely determination to carry out her regimental duties by visiting the widowed wives of Indian soldiers in their villages;²⁶⁵ to Colonel Layton’s deferral of his home-coming from a P.O.W. camp in

²⁵⁷ *MAM*, op cit., p.116.

²⁵⁸ *TS*: p.138.

²⁵⁹ Peter Morey, op cit., p.153.

²⁶⁰ Daniel Colwell, op cit., pp.213-235.

²⁶¹ *DS*: p.593.

²⁶² Jackson, op. cit., (2016), pp.167-172.

²⁶³ *MAM*, op cit., p.79.

²⁶⁴ M.M. Mahood. op. cit. pp. 244-58.

²⁶⁵ *TS*: p.258.

Germany to speak out for his interned sepoys – duties which are already beginning to sound hollow to those who had the ears to hear.

My first example pivots around the relationship between Sarah Layton, her sister Susan, her husband Teddie Bingham, Ronald Merrick, now in military intelligence and Guy Perron, Scott's official ethnographic stranger who later returns to India to ferret out the evidence relating to the Manners case. Sarah Layton's hospital visit to the wounded Merrick after his failure to save Teddie's life goes to the heart of Scott's search for a moral voice. Why did Teddie fail, and why, of all Scott's characters, did Merrick become a 'turn-coat' of sorts himself in acting against his own stated contempt for such a principle?

The second section moves on in time to Partition to consider how '*ma-bap*' was still being articulated, but this time, partly reversed, one of Scott's favourite vocal/narrative strategies. It concerns Sarah's close friend, Ahmed Kasim, son of Mohammed Kasim whose dreams of political unity (Indian style) were shattered by the defection of Ahmed's brother, Sayed, to the INA. Ahmed's sacrifice from the train forms a dramatic conclusion to the final volume of the *Quartet*, *Division of the Spoils*. How, then, is one to interpret such a sacrifice from a figure who on the face of it is still a child, dependent upon the British civilizing mission? Who is supposed to be protecting whom?

The Hospital Visit

For both literary critics and anthropologists who refuse to ban the authorial voice from their texts, the public articulation of duty is 'always to be found in the consciousness of single individuals.'²⁶⁶ And Scott is no naive explorer of character, motivation and consequences.²⁶⁷ So, it is worth pausing a moment to give full rein to that inner voice which an ethnographic stranger, pre-occupied with external social patterns might miss, before proceeding to the way they were dramatized around Merrick's hospital bedside by Scott's key protagonists. This emphasis becomes important as the stranger confronts the claim that Merrick's voice is always spoken through the accounts of others, thereby apparently muting the validity of Scott's own authorial voice. I will come to the ambiguities raised in his account shortly.

First, though, the stranger meets Sarah and Susan Layton, the Eleanor and Marianne Dashwoods of the *Quartet*, who according to Goonetilleke speak from opposing points of view within the British psyche.²⁶⁸ Both daughters have grown up within earshot of the *Raj*, but Scott invested more in Sarah's search for a principled moral stance than he did with Susan, who is left feeling permanently 'rubbed out'

²⁶⁶ Steinberg, op. cit., p.141.

²⁶⁷ Morey, op. cit., p.148.

²⁶⁸ D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, op cit., p.809.

as she puts it, an erasure that was not the exclusive fate of India's downtrodden masses.²⁶⁹ In many ways Sarah is the logical successor to Daphne in the tetralogy. Her criticisms of the British presence in India, and her growing friendship with Ahmed Kasim are deemed un-sound by the patriarchal Pankot circle in which she moves. Potential suitors – and Teddie is one of them - often desert her for the shallower charms of her younger sister. Cleverness is unbecoming.

Now that the domestic virtues were intimately woven into Britain's civilizing mission, it is apparent that Sarah carries more than her fair share of family responsibilities which she conducts with an earnestness that is palpable. However, she still has little say in its manly activities. Her desire to help in the war effort, for example, is frustrated by Susan's retreat into the silence of madness so that family obligations take precedence over personal ambition in a way that seems natural. Although reluctant to visit Merrick in hospital, she is the obvious choice to thank him on behalf of the Layton family for attempting to save Teddie. Only the stranger is privy to those odd moments when Sarah chafes at the assumption.²⁷⁰ Steinberg notes that:

... despite her kindness and her other good qualities /Sarah/ is unavoidably caught up in the wave /of history/ which helps to explain her frequent lack of assertiveness, her willingness to go along with things – so often she seems like a victim.²⁷¹

Scott also uses the term 'victim' throughout his work with little apparent unease. However, its casual use here has taken on a darker note since feminist critics and historians such as Jenny Sharpe²⁷² and Nicholas Dirks²⁷³ have argued against a tendency to regard the British in India as more sinned against than sinning.²⁷⁴ Indeed, such an ideal of self-effacement for women in the service of others might seem strange today. But it is hardly new. Neither was it restricted to the *Raj*. Nevertheless, I share Jenny Sharpe's view here that translating self-interest into self-sacrifice acquired a particular force under imperial rule in India. And Scott shows that when a woman puts her own wishes first, it creates a sense of being at odds with oneself, 'a white noise in the head' as feminist psychologist Rebecca Adams nicely puts it.²⁷⁵

So, Sarah's disorientation over her one-night sexual liaison with Major Clark and subsequent abortion marks a growing estrangement from parental control.

²⁶⁹ *DSc*: p.352/3.

²⁷⁰ For example, to Barbie. In *TC* op. cit., p.55.

²⁷¹ Steinberg, op cit., p. 140.

²⁷² Jenny Sharpe, op. cit., p. 8.

²⁷³ Dirks, op cit., (2006), esp. chapter 9. See also Paul Gilroy, op cit., p.103.

²⁷⁴ Niall Fergusson is one of the most notable examples of whom I'm aware here. Ibid: p.333.

²⁷⁵ Rebecca Abrams, *The Playful Self: Why Women Need Play in their Lives*, (London: Fourth Estate Ltd., 1997), pp.96-98.

However, allowing Clark to un-do her 'old maid's hook and eye' – an abrasive metaphor of the kind that Scott sometimes uses to refer to women's sexuality in the *Quartet* - leaves her a permanent stranger, at home neither in India nor England.²⁷⁶ If a voice from the margins at first suggests weakness, it is also potentially powerful as we listen to Sarah's growing awareness of the falsity of the British presence in India.²⁷⁷ The point that non-belonging and power are often closely interwoven is often overlooked but it is key to Bauman's notion of authenticity.²⁷⁸

By contrast, her new brother-in-law, Teddie Bingham is so cheerfully in tune with his convictions that he is 'difficult to get hold of' – a loss of authorial voice that has so often been the subject of attacks on Scott himself.²⁷⁹ All Teddie's actions, the stranger is told, conform to 'the rules laid down for what a man of his class and calling should do'.²⁸⁰ So, we find Teddie puzzling over the choice of a photograph of himself to send to his bride-to-be. A photograph or a snap? Such a dramatization can hardly be accidental. Scott is too astute for that. In fact, he had met several soldiers like Teddie during the War, 'perfectly decent ... but bone from the neck up'.²⁸¹ Distinctive only in his unreflective commitment to the honour of the regiment and the role of saviour-father to his Indian soldier-children, Teddie is never on intimate terms with the soldiers he apparently devotes his life to serving.²⁸² Nor can he speak their language. Without the opposing presence of a stranger to question the soundness of his judgement, then, where is the scope for self-other critique?

The lack of dramatic definition makes a perfect foil for Merrick, the richly drawn villain of the piece whose Machiavellian presence broods over the whole tetralogy. We think of Merrick as a plebeian policeman, a scholarship boy rising by his own bootstraps, whose origins are deliberately left vague, the essence of being a stranger according to Bauman.²⁸³ On the face of it, Merrick's evident zeal – manifest in the cries of captives he leaves behind - silences suspicions amongst the Pankot circle as to the ambiguity of his provenance.²⁸⁴ Appointed first as District Superintendent of Police and then as Army Intelligence Officer, he is ideally placed to listen out for those subterranean mutterings that indicate all is not well with the official rhetoric. An uneasy cross-over according to Simmel's formulation,

²⁷⁶ *DSc*: p.452.

²⁷⁷ Although the context is different, I draw on Stuart Hall's engaging auto-ethnography to amplify this argument: *Familiar Strangers: A Life Between Two Islands*. (First published London: Allen Lane, reprinted London: Penguin Books, 2017).

²⁷⁸ Bauman, op. cit., p.173.

²⁷⁹ *TS*: p.103.

²⁸⁰ *TS*: p.109.

²⁸¹ Letter to John Wiley and Sons, 31st March 1971, in Haswell, Vol. 11, op cit., p.109.

²⁸² Haswell, op cit., (2002), p.38.

²⁸³ Bauman, op cit., p. 67.

²⁸⁴ Spurling, op cit., p.365.

as the military and the civilian police, two of the most crucial agencies of the colonial state, did not always speak with one voice.²⁸⁵

Unsurprisingly similarities with historical figures are not hard to find. Hilary Spurling likens Merrick to Enoch Powell. Merrick's attitudes, she argues, only serve to 'debase the real feelings of love that lie behind others' good actions, sacrifice, sympathy, charity, kindness and forgiveness;²⁸⁶ whilst Peter Childs viewed him as the incarnation of General Dyer of Amritsar.²⁸⁷ Certainly, the names Reginald and Ronald, with their automatic connotations of power, are similar, and a rigidity of temperament amounting to a phobia in both figures is an obvious correspondence, as is their rabid racism.

Nevertheless, I warmed to Lennard's more sympathetic treatment of him here.²⁸⁸ Even Daphne refers to him as 'fundamentally kind'.²⁸⁹ He is a more complex – even vulnerable – figure than critics have often allowed. For example, the analogy takes no note of Merrick's exemplary role later as stepfather to Teddie's child, nor of the protection he offers Susan, although few British men of any class would have taken on a widow with her psychiatric record, such was the stigma of 'madness'. It is precisely the 'not quite there-ness' of a position that heightens rather than diminishes his strangeness.²⁹⁰

Indeed, Scott refers to him several times as 'psychologically wounded'.²⁹¹ In fact, it is Scott's sympathy for a man driven by insane ambition, always needing to be right, yet caught in forces beyond his control that prevents him from becoming one of Rushdie's caricatures. Merrick is a perfect example of Scott's ability to ferret out the redemptive features in his most odious characters, just as he found flaws in his likeable ones, a generosity of spirit he shared with his near contemporary J.G. Farrell, and the latter's key protagonist, the Collector, in *The Siege of Krishnapur*.²⁹²

As Scott once remarked:

²⁸⁵ Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p.176.

²⁸⁶ Ibid, p.364.

²⁸⁷ Childs, op cit. p.74, and his critique of Rushdie.

²⁸⁸ John Lennard, op cit., p.57 et seq.

²⁸⁹ JC: p.111.

²⁹⁰ Weinbaum, op cit., p.148.

²⁹¹ DSc: p.406 for example.

²⁹² J. G. Farrell, *The Siege of Krishnapur*. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973; reprinted London: Phoenix, 2007).

... no member of the human race, neither British memsahib nor Indian sepoy should have to contend – metaphorically speaking – with spit in their drinking water.²⁹³

Which brings me back to my puzzle. At Scott's insistence - and critics have agreed - we are told that Merrick is the one major character whose authorial voice is muted: he is always spoken through others' accounts or through dialogue and actions.²⁹⁴ True, much of the case against him is built upon hear-say: for example, we only have Hari's uncorroborated testimony of Merrick's critique of 'The Situation' in the previous chapter. Neither is the stranger party to Merrick's dreams, fantasies or to the confessions about his sadistic homosexuality that might be found in a diary.²⁹⁵ Hilary Spurling deals sensitively with the question of Scott's own troubled sexuality and his betrayal in the Army, and it is worth remembering the taboos surrounding its expression at the time, when sexuality, in all its forms, is openly broadcast today.²⁹⁶ However, other critics, such as Michael Gorra, emphasize the way its absence speaks volumes about colonial, not just personal complicity.²⁹⁷ As always, it is the contraries in Scott's voice that make him interesting.

So, let me follow the claim that he is always spoken for by others here. For example, Teddie meets Merrick at his briefing to the regiment on the INA where Scott shows a more thoughtful grasp of the INA's maverick Bengali resistance fighter, Subhas Chandra Bose²⁹⁸ than critics such as Rushdie claim.²⁹⁹ However, it is the sound of Merrick's voice that does not convince. Certainly, it is an assured voice, Teddie tells us, one that praises what Merrick later mocks, namely 'the high level of trust between men and officers which is based on the real concern shown for the men's welfare by those officers.'³⁰⁰ Impervious to any irony himself, Teddie is impressed, feeling 'pleasantly superior to Merrick especially when he listened':

This Merrick fellow certainly knew his stuff even though his voice, confident and carrying was – well – not quite pukka, a shade middle class in the vowel sounds.³⁰¹

²⁹³ In Hilary Spurling, op cit., p.150.

²⁹⁴ Gorra, op cit., p.37; Steinberg, op cit., p.134.

²⁹⁵ I'll retain Scott's usage here rather than adopt today's preferred idiom 'gay sex'.

²⁹⁶ Spurling, op cit., pp.92-94.

²⁹⁷ Gorra, op cit. p.35..

²⁹⁸ Subhas Chandra Bose was President of the Indian National Congress until he resigned when his call for political resistance clashed with Gandhi's vision. He had travelled to the USSR, Japan and Germany making questionable alliances with its leaders before forming the INA with Japan's help. Haswell, op cit., p.292.

²⁹⁹ In Christopher Hitchens, 'A Sense of Mission', *Grand Street*, vol 4(2), Winter 1985, pp.180-199. He argues that Rushdie 'overlooks the obvious', p.198.

³⁰⁰ *DSc*.p.134.

³⁰¹ *TS*: p.133 and p.138.

It is the barely conscious slips in Merrick's pronunciation, phrasing and tone, those give-aways that strip a person of their worth in a second which count.

For Sarah, Merrick's attempts to insinuate himself into her circle are only too self-conscious. Aware of the prick of self-importance, she finds his elaborate attention to verbal etiquette has 'a stilted, self-advertising ring that she didn't altogether care for.' But she is not indifferent to its resonance either. There is 'something in the tone that acts as an irritant, not necessarily an unpleasant one', she reflects, an ambivalence that heightens the precarious position of any stranger at times of national emergency. Either way, no amount of 'sensitivity training' can ever repair the damage of being 'not quite pukka' as Bauman nicely puts it.³⁰²

However, if Merrick's voice is at the mercy of others' accounts, his consequent loss of authority might be just as debilitating as that of Teddy. As we shall see further here, it is not. Whether this is Scott simply reminding his readers of the dangers of authorial voice getting above itself or rejecting the charge of narcissism from his early critics is at least equivocal. Before he finished the *Quartet*, Scott said in an interview for the *New York Post* that Merrick 'like all his characters came from himself. It's all a writer can do – expose himself each time he writes a chapter'.³⁰³ As the theme of trying to do one's family duty un-folds, I suggest that Scott's treatment of Merrick is an integral part of his search for a moral stance in the relation between the inner voice of his characters and the predicaments in which they both find themselves and – inevitably – help to fashion.

Bedside Manners

Which brings me to the visit itself. Scott gives even simple events enormous depth and resonance to bring his moral voice alive.³⁰⁴ The stranger is confronted not with a report of Hari tied naked to a trestle, nor Barbie dying alone, her protest silenced, in an unkindly Samaritan hospital as we shall see. This time, it is Merrick who is physically helpless. Imprisoned in a military hospital bed he is forced to submit to the jealously guarded ministrations of Sister Prior even as he mocks the heroic role in which she casts him to Sarah.

The visit begins conventionally enough with an uneasy dialogue, the sort of civilities often exchanged between visitor and visited in hospital. There are the obvious rituals, Sarah's gift of fruit and smokes, the enquiry about Susan's forthcoming baby; then there are the half-truths and evasions, the socially acceptable explanation of why Sarah is in Calcutta, the reluctance to explain why Merrick has not written the letter – uncharacteristically elegant - about Teddie's death himself, the vague-ness of his impending surgery. Finally, there are what

³⁰² Bauman, op cit., p.67.

³⁰³ Hilary Spurling, op cit., p.304. 'Paul Scott interviewed by J. Tallmer, New York Post, 18th October 1975.

³⁰⁴ Covered in *D.Sc.*, 373-413.

Scott terms 'zones of silence', part of the book's unspoken dialogue: Sarah's morbid fascination with what might be salvaged by way of legs and sexual potency beneath the cage that frames the lower half of his body; the unspoken antagonism between the two of them that Sarah believes is mutual; and her longing to escape that is only confessed to the unknown reader.³⁰⁵

Scott often articulates the relation between familiarity and strangeness that is central to his moral stance with reference to mouths and throats, pointing perhaps to his long-standing fear of developing throat cancer.³⁰⁶ Yet gaping orifices have always had wider cultural significance, particularly in their close association with 'Western' images of hell. Unsurprisingly, post-colonial scholars have seized on these as vital metaphors of colonial complicity. The recording practices I detailed earlier often reduced Indian subjects to 'the singularly disturbing icon of the subcontinent as a hungry mouth', Sara Suleri argues.³⁰⁷ Both interpretations are relevant here, I believe, although it is the edginess between them that resonates.

But what of the colonizer's own gaping orifices? I believe that Scott was more astute in evoking the ordinary colonizer's complex and often contradictory voices than critics have given him credit for. Consider the following exchange with Sarah. An invalid teapot on the bedside table suggests Merrick's speech might have been affected but the tone is quite strong. Eyes and mouth serve as point and counterpoint to what can and cannot be disclosed: the one alert to the way Merrick constantly closes them, the gesture of disabled people who are at the mercy of others' gaze or verbal comments; the other that registers his audible attempt to swallow without choking. The awkwardness between visitor and visited leads to one of those troubling moments where their mouths are forced to touch indirectly. In lighting a cigarette for him she has to pass it dampened from her own lips to his, an intimacy from which she recoils. As one of Scott's main moral guides, she reflects:

He lacks a particular quality, the quality of candour ... there is a point, an important point, at which it becomes difficult to deal with him. He isn't shut off. It isn't that. He's open, wide open, and he wants me to enter, to ask him about the legs I can't see, the forearms I can't see, the obscene mystery beneath the white helmet.³⁰⁸

The only strategy available at such close quarters is to deflect his invitation to probe further. If it seems un-feeling to the stranger in the room, Sarah is

³⁰⁵ *DSc*: p.380.

³⁰⁶ In a letter to his daughter Sally, Scott voiced his fears about a virus he had in his throat. In Haswell, vol.11, op cit., p.362. He also wore a moustache for a period because he disliked the shape of his mouth.

³⁰⁷ Suleri, op.cit., p.29. She is referring to Edmund Burke's catalogue of Indians as 'cartography'.

³⁰⁸ *DSc*.p.381.

unrepentant. No one can be totally subservient to the needs of others without depleting too much of themselves.

Gradually the balance of exchange between them shifts - from Sarah's reflections to Merrick's reportage, from what might have been a friendly conversation that draws the stranger back in to the details of military manoeuvre surrounding Teddie's death, the chess-board logic side of Scott that distances a stranger unfamiliar with Army strategy. Yet all are skilfully interwoven, the rhythm alternately speeding up and slowing down to allow Merrick's train of thought to unfold before returning once again to Sarah's questions and interior monologue.

There is an overture to that fateful day, 'a confession', Merrick calls it, as though he has been rehearsing his score in advance for a potential audience, like the carefully prepared briefing given to the Muzzy Guides regiment earlier.³⁰⁹ His tone becomes justificatory, the style documentary and forensic as he details his connections with Teddy, notably the 'bad luck' that he carries around with him from place to place like the mark of Cain, an ironic awareness of responsibility for the atrocities committed in the name of the *Raj's* civilizing mission. Persecutor becomes persecuted. There is the stone thrown at Teddie's wedding car that was intended for him because of his involvement in the 'Manners case';³¹⁰ the sight of Hari Kumar's Aunt Shalini, weeping at his feet in front of the wedding party at the railway station - the eternal native Indian supplicant with whom both Teddie and Merrick are familiar but fail to discourage;³¹¹ or those 'areas of professional secrecy' between the two that leave Teddie 'frigidly polite', forced by circumstances to offer hospitality to a man who is not a Muzzy Guide.³¹² Sarah, now the obedient listener, seems almost forgotten.

To the fateful day itself. In several pages of terse prose unbroken apart from that reference again to an irritation in Merrick's throat, Scott exerts every literary muscle to make his account ring true. Accompanying Teddie into the jungle to take charge of a suspect sepoy caught by a British patrol, Merrick finds Mohammed Baksh on his knees, begging Teddie to shoot him according to the dictates of the Code. Sight or sound, which comes first? Between sobs, it is the way Baksh fixes upon the bridge of Teddie's nose to avoid the insolence of direct eye contact before alighting on his regimental flash that alerts Merrick to the fact that Baksh is an ex-Muzzy guide.

But what is and is not spoken matters too. Taking Scott's conviction that principles need to be enacted if they are to mean anything, Teddie shakes the man's

³⁰⁹ *TS*: pp.128-144. 'Muzzy Guides is the playful fictional nick-name Scott gave to the prestigious Muzaffirabad Regiment.

³¹⁰ *DSc*: pp. 161, 163.

³¹¹ *DSc*: p.207.

³¹² *DSc*: p.383.

shoulders. 'You're still a soldier. Act like one,' crowning his words with the time-honoured formula: 'You've done very wrong, but I am still your father and mother' before giving the sepoy his name, 'Bingham, Bingham', with its implicit promise to speak up for him.³¹³ A promise with a hollow ring under the circumstances: the most any *Jiff* could expect would have been a firing squad from his own regiment, although historical records show that deserters were too numerous for the post-war Indian government to process. Prosecutions were few.³¹⁴

It is a catalytic moment in the novel where Scott shows that the cracks in the British myth of occupying the high moral ground can no longer be ignored.

As Merrick explains:

Teddie couldn't believe that Indian soldiers who'd eaten the king's salt and been proud to serve in the army generation after generation could be suborned like that, buy their way out of prison camp by turning coat, come armed hand in hand with the Japs to fight their own countrymen, fight the very officers who'd trained them.³¹⁵

As if to drive home the point, what makes the two men so different is the distinction between amateurism, an almost feudal concept at the time, and its modern counterpart, professionalism. Teddy was just such an amateur, Merrick insists, his devotion to his men, his equipment, his regiment an unquestionable part of the traditional military Code of honour. He embodied '*ma-bap*' as someone with a rightful claim to its authority by virtue of his permanent presence in India.

By contrast, Merrick is a professional stranger passing through, simultaneously able to draw on a fund of trustworthy knowledge about British indifference to Indian wishes over the years yet penetrate the innermost thoughts of a single individual's mind.³¹⁶ Moreover, as an expert on tribes, indigenous and elite, he can speak in tongues often alien to the tiny Pankot hill-top community. Yet he is a fully paid-up member of neither social group. In fact, he is the perfect forerunner of that new breed of administrators arriving from Luton and Stevenage in the 1960s who have little commitment to the *real* India, a slip of the tongue on Scott's part, perhaps, that reveals a possessiveness at the heart of every colonizing enterprise.³¹⁷ Like the new towns, Merrick speaks as one unencumbered by history, his voice able to roam around at will.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Lennard, *op cit.*, p. 95.

³¹⁵ *DSc*:408

³¹⁶ Bauman's expert, *op. cit.*, p.199.

³¹⁷ Scott makes numerous references to this both in lectures and in his fiction. See *MAM op cit.*, p.100.

So, Baksh is more useful to him as a prisoner than a corpse, a vital source of intelligence on Japanese military tactics. Skilful low-key questioning at first about his family, eases Baksh into revealing the many layers of complicity in what initially seems to be a simple act of disloyalty. In fact, Baksh becomes the ideal anthropological informant, revealing how Indian sepoy like himself were recruited, the inducements they were offered, which Indian officers willingly deserted their regiment and which were led astray by others – a difficult matter to judge from a distance. Neither loyalty nor disloyalty speaks with a single voice.

These are insights that can only be articulated by a stranger. In giving Merrick the task of conveying to the Pankot circle the shock of discovering that Indians did not meekly acquiesce in Britain's evangelizing mission, Scott brings home the shortcomings of using *ma-bap* as an instrument to protect a regime that was already turning in on itself.

How then does Scott let Merrick account for the betrayal of his own stated cynicism about '*ma-bap*' to become the prototypical turncoat himself as he follows Teddie and Baksh into the jungle for the remaining two ex-Muzzy Guides? In the ensuing melee, Teddie is shot, his jeep burned – 'a praise-worthy sacrifice for a principle the world no longer had time or inclination to uphold' Scott's stranger remarks.³¹⁸ But Merrick, rather than retreating, tries to save Teddie, only to be badly burnt himself.

This is a wonderfully troubling moment in the tetralogy and a perfect example of Scott's love of part-reversal that is alert to the way that the sounds of one voice are audible in another's. Consider Merrick's *post hoc* rationalization for his action where his insistence on emphasizing the differences between the two men earlier becomes clearer. In Teddie's eyes, Merrick is not the man to deal properly with INA suspects: he cannot measure up to the ideal of *ma-bap*. The following evocation of an ideal inner circle from which Merrick is always excluded is a striking piece of self-analysis that helps to counter the claim that no stranger can ever apprehend the 'real' Merrick's intentions. Moreover, it shows how the sound of a voice carries a wealth of associations that have less to do with the content of what is said but more about the meanings and values by which one lives. The latter can no longer be taken for granted. As Merrick puts it:

I wasn't the same class. You can't disguise it, can you. It comes out in subtle ways, even when you've learned the things to say and how to say them ... in knowing the places or the people your kind of people know ... in the lack of points of common contact ... there comes a moment when a fellow like Teddie looks at us and honestly believes we lack a vital gift ... that makes us not quite trustworthy. That's what he thought, and that's why

³¹⁸ DS: pp.262-3.

he was killed ... trying to show me how a thing should be done because he couldn't trust me to do it right'.³¹⁹

Nothing can better convey the ignominy of finding himself the object of Teddie's evangelizing mission than this cool piece of retrospective accounting. We can hear the condescension that lies behind the stated benevolence of *ma-bap*. But there is no mawkishness or self-pity in Merrick's voice, no romantic mythologizing in his analysis. Neither is there any feeling of compassion for Teddie's plight. In a deliberate piece of self-mockery, he claims that he had stayed with Teddie before eventually pulling him out of the burning jeep 'because ... mine was a professional action. I was afraid what people would say if I'd left him to fry'.³²⁰ Including Sarah in his musings again, he insists she understand that the difference between them was not simply a matter of the facts of class, hierarchy and privilege but the lack of fit between values that are rarely explicit. It was Teddie's unquestioned emotional commitment to the regiment as against Merrick's professional detachment that was at stake.³²¹

As if to prove his point, Merrick claims that there was a Damascene moment in the jungle where he nearly succumbs to the regimental mystique, reminiscent of Hari Kumar's near capitulation to Merrick, or Daphne's to the memsahib role in the previous chapter. Rather than being a 'radical tempering of Scott's critical appraisal' qua Parry, this is a favourite vocal narrative device of Scott's to emphasize again that chink of freedom and integrity which is central to his moral voice:

I mean for a moment there, I was an amateur myself. I fell for it, really fell for it ... Devotion. Sacrifice. Self-Denial. A cause. An obligation. A code of conduct, a sort of final moral definition ... I mean a definition of us, what we're here for, people living in an environment some sort of God created. The whole impossible nonsensical dream.³²²

As we listen to a man who probes the contradictory notions of duty 'that the *Raj* can rarely risk whispering to itself', he has broken the silence that for Sarah is the way we protect our own prejudices from being heard.³²³ A widely institutionalized collusion at the time, of course. Had Merrick been overheard, his career would have been irreparably damaged.³²⁴ This brings Merrick's voice closer to Scott's

³¹⁹ *DSc*: p.387.

³²⁰ *DSc*: p.405.

³²¹ *Ibid*.

³²² *DSc*. p.408.

³²³ Gorra, *op cit.*, p.35.

³²⁴ Orwell remarks: 'All over India there are Englishmen who secretly loathe the system of which they are a part; and just occasionally when they are quite certain of being in the right company, their hidden bitterness overflows.' *The Road to Wigan Pier*. (London: first published Victor Gollancz, 1937; reprinted London: Penguin Books 2014), p.135.

intention, in that he considered his work to be an active novel of dissent, not one of melancholy turned in on itself in Jacob Mezey's or Paul Gilroy's terms.³²⁵ Or are both in play?

In that split second between action and paralysis in the jungle, where we never know where our ethical principles will take us, Merrick's claim that 'No act is performed without a decision being made to perform it' – questionable in itself – raises the ever-present dilemma of responsibility for our actions.³²⁶ It is Sarah who points out the difference between mindlessly obeying the rules and intuitively responding to the duty of care for others. 'You went down there without thinking why you went Ronald. I mean when the shooting started, you saw they were in trouble and needed help'.³²⁷ For a man to do something heroic for noxious reasons is alien to her experience. In effect, Merrick is doing *ma-bap* properly, she insists; he does belong to that very class that would disown him.³²⁸ In reaching the right conclusion, she mis-hears - or chooses to ignore - the ambiguous motivation behind it.

As Sarah is manoeuvred out of the room by Sister Prior, she notices that a peculiar serenity comes over his face. His eyes are closed. It is as though inner and outer voice are in harmony once more. But not quite. Repeated is that curious irritation in Merrick's throat – surely the work of the devil - that casts doubt on the veracity of his account. Perhaps even at this stage Merrick has formulated other plans that will eventually lead to his marriage to Susan before his transgressions catch up with him. Dressed in Pathan clothes the better to probe the depravities of the bazaar, Merrick is found stabbed to death, almost provoking his own demise according to Count Bronowsky, a neat reminder of the way the British 'quasi-suicidally' came to an end of themselves in India.³²⁹ I think Francine Weinbaum's psychoanalytic touch here is right: *arriviste* or not Merrick has secretly been in thrall to the whole 'ego swelling legend' of *ma-bap* all the time.³³⁰

This is the closest Merrick comes to belonging and the nearest any stranger can approach his real voice. But it has not been absent as the previous claim suggested. Rather he has taken over as our moral guide here, revealing the complex and contradictory motivations behind human action. The whole scenario is a superb example of Scott's grasp of the micro-politics of social action and the push and pull between inner and outer voice, involvement and detachment, objectivity and subjectivity – none of which are easily separated in practice.

³²⁵ Mezey, op cit.; Gilroy, op cit.

³²⁶ *DSc*: p.386.

³²⁷ *DSc*: p.406

³²⁸ *Ibid*.

³²⁹ *DS*: p.571. See also Childs, op. cit., p.37.

³³⁰ Weinbaum, op cit., p.135.

Sarah is left with more questions than answers, that familiar refrain in Scott's work. At first, she thinks Merrick's account diminishes both himself and Teddie, but changes her mind, to reflect:

I don't know ... where that kind of courage comes from or why, or what its purpose is, but I know it has a purpose. It's a kind of madness, a sublime insanity, which even Ronald who's experienced it can't really explain ... For a moment, they are both larger than life. Teddie calling stupidly for his men and Ronald stupidly risking death to try and save him. And that's how I shall remember them. Without understanding why it makes them larger ... but the explanation was there in front of her, and in her mind – secreted in all the dark corners of her brief encounters with him and with his reputation.³³¹

According to Francine Weinbaum, Sarah's reflections represent Scott's appeal to a higher unifying instinct amidst the folly of Britain's presence in India.³³² A satisfactory enough explanation for the moment, but as always in Scott the stranger returns to unsettle her. Pondering the afternoon's events later, she turns away from her Nelson moment, acknowledging wryly that she 'might just as well have left the duty unperformed as perform it so badly'.³³³ A moment of bad faith? All she knows with any certainty is that no amount of physical proximity to Merrick will ever induce her to trust his voice.

With these modulations in mind, let me turn to my second example that further complicates any straightforward apprehension of *ma-bap* as necessarily inauthentic, anachronistic or paternalistic.³³⁴

The Train Journey

We follow the way Scott treats Sarah's newly found Indian friend, Ahmed Kasim, who responds to the call of *ma-bap* by sacrificing his own life to protect her travelling companions from being massacred by Hindu and Sikh separatists on the train. The massacre forms the climax of the *Quartet*, a moment of truth that symbolises the British cantonment's realization that there can be no more prevarication over Indian independence.

We are introduced – abruptly - to Ahmed in the second volume of the *Quartet*. Like Teddie, Ahmed is difficult to get hold of. The elder son of Mohammed Ali Kasim, the Muslim Congressman whose younger son Sayed betrays the Muslim law on verbal contract by defecting to the INA, Ahmed is an apolitical figure, a playboy, one 'who feels himself an exile in search of his own India' according to the self-

³³¹ *DSc*: pp. 402, 403.

³³² Francine Weinbaum, *op cit.*, p.136.

³³³ *DSc*: p.406.

³³⁴ See Morey, *op cit.*, p.20, Colwell, *op cit.*

styled Russian émigré Count Bronowsky.³³⁵ For others in the *Quartet* he is still an Indian at heart despite his Western education and mannerisms. In fact, those self-conscious musings on his lack of curiosity and desire for opinions ready-made are perhaps grist to the mill for Scott's critics who claim his Indian characters lack substance.³³⁶ But this is too hasty.

Two previous events that bring out the relations between Ahmed and Sarah help make sense of the un-voiced tensions at stake here between blind adherence to the British civilizing mission and the possibility of Indians turning it to their own advantage. Early in their friendship as they go riding together over the Mirat plains, Ahmed performs an elaborate minuet, pausing under a tree where she pauses, breaking into a canter where she canters, but always several paces behind, a deference reminiscent of Dass' play on the formal Master-Servant relationship with Scott at Timmapuram. Mockery works best if intentions are left hanging in the air. Uncomfortably aware that she sounds like a schoolmistress, Sarah fills the silence by peppering him with questions. Is he a Shia Muslim or a Sunni? Why has she never heard the muezzin when there are so many minarets visible from the cantonment? Will the forthcoming Id-al-fitr prayers be held in a mosque or outside? But then she is an infidel, the stranger reminds us. What else can one expect? Irritated, Sarah wheels her horse round full circle to confront him, as she

... couldn't find an acceptable way of explaining her impulsive action ... That kind of meaning wasn't found easily ... To make words up just for the sake of saying something would be incongruous.³³⁷

Realizing that mutuality is rarely enforceable allows the stranger to share in their respective inner dialogues. Sarah wonders conventionally enough if the two of them 'have come from different planets' while Ahmed thinks 'I shall keep my distance, I shall keep my place', and continues to do so.³³⁸ But Sarah's gesture challenges the false hierarchy of colonialism, that 'sore-throated cawing of the crows' which is always present but barely registered consciously at the time.³³⁹ Throats will continue to be significant for Scott both as the source of protest and of repression as we shall see again in the following chapter.

My second chosen event reverses established hierarchies and their accompanying obligations, this time on Ahmed's own terms. It involves Scott's official ethnographer, the Cambridge historian/ethnographer Guy Perron who drives out with Sarah to witness Ahmed's skill at falconry. 'This is the old India' Sarah tells Guy, and clearly the stiffness of her previous encounter with Ahmed has given way

³³⁵ *DSc.*, p.455.

³³⁶ Rushdie, op cit. See also *DSc.*, p. 94.

³³⁷ *DSc.*, p.128-129.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

to a stronger mutual attachment, one that is closely bound up with her love of the country.³⁴⁰ As spectators they watch spell-bound from a distance as the hawk quivers a moment on Ahmed's gloved fist before rising in

... a powerful, and breath-taking ascent; a great arc, the beginning of a spiral of such formal beauty that Perron caught his breath ... until he discerned in the empty heavens, through the planned geometry of the hawk's attack, the objective, the intended point of killing contact: a dark speck intent on escape. The hawk plummeted. Its shape merged with the speck. Sarah cried out with pain and pleasure.³⁴¹

Here we have no child-like falconer who needs the restraining hand of the British civilizing mission. Nor is it the voice of an exile, poised uneasily between 'here' and 'there'. This is an Indian fully in command of his own voice as Scott describes the far-off sound of Ahmed's voice, 'a sound like Tek, Tek, Tek, Allahallahallah' until the hawk returns to his gloved arm, thence to secure its jesses and protect the two strangers from 'its fearsome glare.'³⁴² It is as though Ahmed's visitors are invited to be part of a game of love between old friends. Perfectly at ease with the hawk, he tickles its stomach and invites Guy to do likewise.

Both scenes are laced with ambiguity, each redolent of an India that is slipping away into collective amnesia, the stuff of imperial nostalgia, if not exoticism, one might argue. But, as always, Scott delights in complicating what seem to be simple colonial tropes. Hence, he refuses to languish in the old romantic construction of a hawking-hunting India of the Maharajahs. The scene is prescient, the falcon's attack a foretaste of what is to come and a reminder that violence always begets more violence.

Which brings me to the climax of the *Quartet* where the complexity of family obligations become condensed into one spectacular enactment of *ma-bap*: namely Ahmed's sacrifice from the train. Compressed into less than twenty pages, Scott's prose is at its most muscular. We find the Layton family, Guy Perron, Susan's son Edward and his *ayah* together with the Grace's, the Peabodys and a stranger, all travelling first class from Pankot to Mirat. No one, it seems, is aware of the cabalistic sign chalked on their compartment door. The journey has barely begun before the train suddenly brakes with the sound of gunfire, shattering glass and screams from compartments further down the train, amplified in turn by Susan's shrieks. Pandemonium ensues as Ahmed throws himself from the train with a half-heard 'It seems to be me they want', and an instruction to the family to lock the

³⁴⁰ *DS*: p. 516.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

³⁴² *DS*: p.517.

compartment door after he has gone, to be massacred by Hindu and Sikh separatists.³⁴³

Time is alternately strung out and telescoped as events unfold beyond a stranger's ability to process them. What seems like hours later we find Sarah on the railway siding, filling jugs of water for the dead and dying. 'I couldn't do the other thing' she tells Perron who is seized by a sudden paralysis, his liberal intellect apparently ineffectual in a crisis just as its critics claim.³⁴⁴

Still later as the surviving party piles back into the train another cacophony erupts allowing Scott to show how the actions and inactions of ordinary people, barely registered at the time, become part of that 'moral drift of history' he often referred to. Neither does that drift speak with a single voice. What had Ahmed said, if anything? How many assailants were there, two, twenty, an army? No one can agree. Then there are the Peabodys who refuse to look at the trail of devastation left behind, unaware of their indirect complicity in the wider policy failure of divide and rule; or that anonymous voice from the first-class compartment muttering 'Savages ... Once they've gone, they'll all cut each-others' throats. Non-violence? It makes you laugh'.³⁴⁵ The stranger is left to hear Guy Perron's guilty sigh of relief at his own survival when the train eventually slides 'smoothly and silkily' away leaving in its wake a world that seemed to have lost its moral bearings.³⁴⁶ Such was Britain's betrayal of the princely states and its over-hasty exit from India.

By any standard, Ahmed's sacrifice is a troubling conclusion to the tetralogy, just as was Merrick's volte face in respect of Teddie. At first, there is the familiar anger and guilt as Sarah realises that she has failed the man she has grown to love:

... what I was doing was just as useless as what he'd done. And I hated Ahmed for not keeping the door locked and telling us that he damned well wasn't going to die ... But when it came to it he didn't let any of it even begin to happen ... In which case I suppose that meant he knew there was nothing to say because there wasn't any alternative because everyone else in the carriage automatically knew what he had to do. It was part of the bloody Code.³⁴⁷

But making sense of the chaos of events can only be gauged from a distance. Here Scott's dense, argumentative style reasserts itself as Sarah tries to reconcile inner with outer voice. Certainly, she recalls, Ahmed was aware of the volatile political situation but had always refused to take it seriously. Alternatively, it could

³⁴³ DS: p.593.

³⁴⁴ DS: p.587.

³⁴⁵ D.S: p.586. See also Cox, op. cit., p.6.

³⁴⁶ D.S: ibid.

³⁴⁷ D.S: p.594.

have been because the Hindus did not want Muslims in Congress. Or perhaps it was the stance that Ahmed's father had taken against the INA in respect of his son, Sayed. There again, the massacre could be in retaliation for an incident earlier when Muslims butchered a group of Hindus, a direct reference to the appalling slaughter that ensued during Partition with Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs fleeing East and West to be on the 'right' side of the line the British were drawing across their homeland.³⁴⁸

All possible conjectures. But returning to her key refrain she compares her own impotence on the platform:

I couldn't stop filling the bloody jars, going through my brave little memsahib act... What I was doing was just as useless as what he'd just done ...³⁴⁹

with the broader acknowledgement of ... 'the senselessness of it all, the mess ... that I felt it was our responsibility, our fault that after 100 years and more the mess still existed' a dereliction of duty that clearly overrides any adherence to abstract principles.³⁵⁰ We can hear Scott's protest at Britain's culpability and its refusal to recognise that the conflict was a sustained movement of protest against imperial rule pre-and post-World War II, not just a gentleman's disagreement conducted from a distance.

So, whether a stranger hears Ahmed's response to the call of *ma-bap* as heroic, futile or tragic is as difficult to answer unequivocally as it has been with Teddie and Merrick. Is it to be damned with faint praise, as Colwell's comparison of Ahmed's sacrifice with Captain Titus Oates' disappearance into the Antarctic snow argues?³⁵¹ Or is there, after all, a dignity in Ahmed's sacrifice, as critics such as Goonetilleke claim?³⁵² Of course, the notion that the sacrifice of black lives matters less than those of white is a deliberate provocation. According to Peter Morey, 'in making his gesture, Ahmed is revealing his inability to break out of behaviour patterns demanded by what Sarah calls 'a received life'.³⁵³ Even Haswell considers that Ahmed's acting out his expected duty to protect illustrates 'that liberal flaw, that subconscious sense that whites know better and that blacks will lay down their lives for their memsahibs', linking it explicitly with Scott's dismay at the perversion of the humanist project.³⁵⁴ Colwell goes further, calling it a 'ritual enactment of the dismemberment of India carried out upon the Indian body.'³⁵⁵

³⁴⁸ Tharoor, op cit., p.142-144.

³⁴⁹ D.S: p.592.

³⁵⁰ D.S: ibid.

³⁵¹ Colwell, op cit. p.231.

³⁵² Goonetilleke, op cit.

³⁵³ Peter Morey, op cit., p152.

³⁵⁴ Haswell, op cit., (2002), p.57.

³⁵⁵ Colwell, op cit., p.230.

But given what the stranger has been ear and eyewitness to previously, is it likely that a man who mocks the memsahib's every move when out riding with her in one setting and is in command and control of a falcon in another would meekly acquiesce in 'the bloody Code'? This is to deprive Ahmed of that moral agency that I'm arguing is central to Scott's own authorial voice. Both Francine Weinbaum and David Rubin interpret his sacrifice as an act of love although I think that Weinbaum overplays her psychoanalytic hand in claiming that Sarah's anger is tinged with admiration 'because his action was dictated by his desire not to sacrifice his fellow passengers.'³⁵⁶ More plausibly, Rubin argues that Ahmed's sacrifice is 'surely intended to represent more than futility for that would preclude the very tragedy that is at the heart of Scott's view of the events leading up to Partition'.³⁵⁷ Realizing some of the likely complexity of motives does not mean that Scott turns a deaf ear to the horror.

All these voices jostling for attention have a place. But the supreme gift, the offering up of life, has its own voice by placing an obligation on the gods to return what has been seized.³⁵⁸ Ahmed's sacrifice might be seen then, not as an act of servility to the Code but one of mutual entailment. Hence Scott's insistence that despite the atrocities committed in the name of Britain's civilizing mission and the disastrous fragmentation of India into two separate nation states, no stranger can neglect the struggle to work towards human betterment. Consider again the passage he wrote as a rejoinder to his critics:

Returning to the scene /of the massacres/ in fiction isn't due to nostalgia or to guilt. I return to it because to me the death and interment of liberal humanism is still a living issue.³⁵⁹

That he continued to wrestle with this demon until his death whilst others dismiss liberal humanism as terminally senile, having little or no validity today, is I believe, testament to the continued vitality of Scott's moral voice. Whilst we may be more prudent about intervening in others' lives, we cannot wash our hands altogether of responsibility for their welfare.

Reprise

In this section, I've explored Scott's search for a voice in the way that a particular notion of duty under British imperialism, namely *ma-bap*, is articulated in practice. Just where do British responsibilities about the imperial legacy in India begin and end? With Sarah as official interpreter, Scott shows the concrete particulars, the moral reasoning, doubts, conflicts and perversions that his protagonists engaged in

³⁵⁶ Weinbaum, op cit., p.141.

³⁵⁷ Rubin, op cit., p.122.

³⁵⁸ Jackson, op cit. (2016), p.116-8.

³⁵⁹ *MAM*, op cit., p.48-49.

to question the view that sharing the white man's salt is necessarily condescending or inauthentic. To reiterate, service is not always servile.

Firstly, by bringing the voices of Merrick and Sarah together over a hospital bed we can better contrast Teddie's over-commitment to a paternalistic ethos that has become perverted in pre-Independence India with Merrick's under-commitment to a reciprocal ethic of care, where assiduous police work takes the place of concern about people. Yet it is Merrick's analysis of 'The Situation' – the voice that is always supposed to be spoken about by others – that evokes Scott's most stinging critique of the moral bankruptcy of Empire. Secondly, by listening carefully to the range of circumstances that might have impelled Ahmed to act as he did and his sacrifice, perhaps, inevitable, we can better understand the awful significance – and tragedy - of loyalty to an ideal that had become unworthy of such devotion. And there is no mistaking Scott's own moral stance in those bitterly satirical parting shots from the train.

Yet it is tempting for today's ethnographic stranger to hear only the gross paternalism, snobbery and racism that undoubtedly underpinned adherence to *ma-bap* in these two cases. To say that Sarah was incapable of affirming or rejecting her judgement of Merrick, that Merrick could not have done otherwise than attempt to rescue Teddie, or that Ahmed would subconsciously have accepted his place in the scheme of things is to treat Scott's fictional characters as mere objects of discourse and ignore his continuing commitment to human dignity, mutuality and reciprocity.³⁶⁰ Whilst we may not like unsettling matters, neither can we consign Scott's commitment to these elements of liberal humanism to oblivion. Like the author himself, they deserve another hearing.

We left Merrick's body with the name 'Bibighar' scrawled in his blood on the mirror. My final empirical chapter returns full circle in search of the image that Scott wished later he had used for his whole *oeuvre*, those happenings around the English garden that speak both to the desire to embrace and to exclude.

³⁶⁰ See Goonetilleke, op cit.

CHAPTER 4: CULTIVATING ONE'S GARDEN

The previous chapter explored how Scott's fictional protagonists responded to 'ma-bap' under imperial rule which is one of the major keys to unlocking Scott's moral stance. This final empirical chapter returns full circle to the image that Scott initially intended to use in his late novels.³⁶¹ Not that of a girl running soundlessly from - we know not what. Rather Scott searched for a voice via the social practices his protagonists brought to life in and around their gardens whose taken-for-granted visibility can easily overwhelm the other senses. Contrary to Simmel's overly spatial analysis, gardens need to be felt in all their immediacy, not just seen.³⁶² Listening for the way his characters speak or are spoken about amongst the imperialist's canna lilies and roses allows us to better understand the subtler forms of colonial power and resistance that occurred as much within as between British and Indian subjects in their hill-top retreats. In fact, Scott deliberately used gardens to air the moral contradictions between intimacy and aloofness, proximity and distance, self and other under imperialism which, as Janis Tedesco argues, he never really resolved.³⁶³

First, though, let me set the development of gardens in India in their wider cultural and historical context before turning to Scott's fictional evocation. Following the eighteenth-century European Enlightenment principles of garden design, the early public gardens in India, such as the one first established by the British at Madras were laid out like a grid, a geometry that might have appealed to Scott's visual/spatial sense.³⁶⁴ In fact, Scott's mature work is full of references to his interest in Euclidean shapes and forms that have led critics to characterize him – mistakenly in my view – primarily as a visual writer.

Indeed, many of the earlier colonizers of India thought in such Lockean terms, imagining the landscape as a blank slate awaiting the cultivating hand and eye of the English gardener, a one-directional impact model that still holds sway today. For example, at a recent Summer School in Cambridge, John Lennard used maps to show imperialism as a one-way flow from Britain to India, giving no hint of the reciprocal East-West influences that a more detailed analysis might offer. A pedagogical tool, of course, but a seductive one. It reinforces an exaggerated centre-periphery mythology of colonized subjects as passive recipients of the centre's assumed beneficence and obscures the link between ideas about proper order at home and proper order of the British Empire overseas. And it is no

³⁶¹ Haswell, op cit., (2002), p.99.

³⁶² Jackson, (1989), p.6.

³⁶³ Janis Tedesco, 'Staying On: The Final Connection', *Western Humanities Review*, Fall 1985, 39 (3), pp.195-211.

³⁶⁴ Charles Carlton and Caroline Carlton, 'Gardens of the Raj', *History Today*, July 1996, pp.22-28.

accident that Bauman describes the modern state as a 'gardening state', from which the weeds need to be constantly removed.³⁶⁵

Nor was Britain's the only influence. India had already been partly landscaped by the Mughals, if not the Persians before them, although women were banned from entering Mughal gardens. And according to Richard Grove, early Renaissance conceptions of Edenic paradise were derived from Zoroastrianism, a hybrid that inevitably complicated the Western aesthetic of form and its transformation under the *Raj*.³⁶⁶

Indeed, the more intimate gardens of the *Raj* that became popular with the new generation of administrators appointed after 1857 to service the princely states under the aegis of paramountcy deliberately encouraged roses to flourish alongside canna lilies. Although the flowers obeyed the current rules for social distancing, they always remained within earshot of one another.³⁶⁷ As a result, Eugenia Herbert notes, 'colonial gardens often ended up as creoles, their mix of familiar and exotic flowers growing under the shade of mangoes, palms and peepuls in lieu of the stately elms and oaks of home'.³⁶⁸ So, a stranger searching for a single melodic line in Scott's voice is met instead with a chorus of floral arrangements to delight the senses, one that resonates with any multi-ethnic British polity today. What could be a more natural way to bridge the differences between East and West?

But this is too well mannered. Gardens have their darker side. Whilst the Madras public gardens sported a 'variety of plants where all could promenade among the mango, coconut and guava trees', specimens of which also found their way into Kew Gardens, to be dissected and cross-bred like their human counterparts on public display elsewhere in the West.³⁶⁹ Remember the scientific pre-occupation with Indians' biological traits that included Sir Herbert Risley's unpleasant 'nasal index' mentioned earlier.³⁷⁰ Neither can an ethnographic stranger ignore Britain's blatant profiteering from other plants, such as the ruthless industrialization of India's opium production and the tea trade in Assam and Darjeeling, whose delicate leaves graced the tables of every English tea-party.³⁷¹

³⁶⁵ Bauman, op cit., p.30.

³⁶⁶ Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens, and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, reprinted 1996), p.4.

³⁶⁷ Haswell, op cit., (2002), p.8.

³⁶⁸ Eugenia Herbert, 'Garden Imperialism', December 15th, 2011 (a) www.berfrois.com/2011/2012/eugenia-herbert-indias-colonial-gardens. Downloaded 22nd June 2018. See also Eugenia Herbert's *Flora's Empire: British Gardens in India*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011b), p.61.

³⁶⁹ Carlton and Carlton, op. cit. pp.22-28.

³⁷⁰ Jenkins, op. cit., 2003, pp. 1143-1170.

³⁷¹ Dirks, op. cit., 2006, pp.142-144.

In fact, attempts to impose a *cordon sanitaire* between colonizer and colonized with their gardens evoked memories of those flash points in history that resonate throughout the *Quartet*. First, of course, the Jallianwallah Bagh, Scott's reminder of the enclosed garden walls of Amritsar where, in 1919, Colonel Dyer ordered his Gurkha soldiers to fire on the peaceful demonstration that had been inspired by Gandhi's non-co-operation movement.³⁷² Hence Scott's play on the term, with its ironic references to the Chillianwallah bazaar where Hari Kumar lives with his Aunt Shalini, the very antithesis of the formal order of a garden.

At their best, then, Scott's fictional gardens might work their magic through the potential to reach across different worlds, enabling us imaginatively to enter the lives of others and ideally confront our prejudices, one of the means, I suggest, of morally cultivating one's garden. At worst, they could be as damaging to the colonizers as they were to the colonized, as Orwell showed in his essay, 'Shooting the Elephant'.³⁷³ This is a different argument to the charge we met earlier from Nicholas Dirks against an influential Cambridge school of historiography claiming that Empire wasn't so bad after all, a claim that Scott certainly rejects.³⁷⁴

Let me turn in detail now to the gardens in his novels. Two, one at the Macgregor House known as 'the house of the white', and the other, the Bibighar, 'the house of the black' provide the score from which the drama of Hari and Daphne's love affair unfolds.³⁷⁵ The opening notes are deliberately complicated. And – no surprises here - there are several competing versions of their history, whose voices rise and fall as the evidence is relayed from one character to another, but they all start with a love affair that is ultimately betrayed.

According to the most popular version that Daphne relates to Hari, the Macgregor House and gardens were created by an Indian prince. His love affair with a classical raga singer who sang for him each morning and night to protect her honour reminds the stranger again of Parvati. Significantly, the prince came to love only that which she gave freely, her voice. Scott contrasts this gift with that other garden, the Bibighar, or 'house of women' which the prince's son built to service India's indigenous and colonial sex trades. His death at the Cawnpore massacre left the garden untended.

In fact, the tension between the two – a threnody – echoes powerfully throughout the whole *Quartet*, like the boom-boom of the Marabar caves in E.M. Forster's classic. With a nice ear for the contradictions of imperial rule that Homi Bhabha claims always come to the fore when applied to other-ness, the Bibighar, by

³⁷² The term 'bagh' is equivalent to the garden in Hindustani.

³⁷³ Orwell, 'Shooting the Elephant', in *George Orwell: Essays*. op.cit.,p.22. He writes 'I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant, it is his own freedom that he destroys'.

³⁷⁴ Dirks, op cit., (2001), p.310-314.

³⁷⁵ *JC*, pp.150-151.

contrast, is the one place in Mayapore where Daphne and Hari can ‘be utterly natural with each other’.³⁷⁶ But it is also the place where Daphne is serially raped. That the marauders came not from amongst Macaulay’s favoured few, but were nameless peasants, ‘smelly persons of the worst sort’ forms part of Rushdie’s critique of Scott’s use of rape as a stale trope.³⁷⁷ As argued earlier, I think this is too gross an inference. If we listen carefully, it is also the moment when Hari commits himself, whether voluntarily or in deference to Daphne’s wishes, to ‘saying nothing’, a troubling commitment that haunts the tetralogy.

But there is a third garden whose significance for the overall orchestration of Scott’s work can easily be overlooked: namely Mohammed Ali Kasim’s onion patch— situated ironically opposite the local *zenana* house - that he was permitted to cultivate during his incarceration at Premanagar jail to symbolise his protest at Jinnah’s League for Partition.³⁷⁸ On his release the stranger overhears him talking to Governor Malcolm about ‘cultivating his garden’, as he finds himself ‘out of rhythm with my country’s temporary emotional feelings’ a theme that gives unity of purpose to Scott’s moral voice.³⁷⁹ ³⁸⁰ In fact, the mantra becomes an important key to the British presence in India literally and metaphorically. A time for contemplation, certainly. The phrase also has a more active connotation that Hannah Arendt termed ‘natality’, the sense of being receptive to what is at hand, able to create new possibilities from the human tendency to conserve the past.³⁸¹ The stranger will find both versions at work here.

With the sound of those other gardens in mind, let me turn to the two gardens that I’ll explore in detail here, both of which I think are central to Scott’s search for a moral stance. Firstly, the garden owned by the military Layton family at Rose Cottage that Scott developed in what he called his ‘Slow Movement’, *The Towers of Silence*, where ex-missionary Barbie Batchelor has the main solo part. Secondly, by way of contrast, we have the ragged apology of a garden leased to Lucy and her husband, Tusker Smalley by Mr. and Mrs. Bhoolahoy, members of India’s aspiring entrepreneurial class in Scott’s final novel, *Staying On*. Rather than reading these as separate novels taken at different points in time in the history of Britain’s relations with India, I share Janis Tedesco’s argument that they are held

³⁷⁶ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. (London: Routledge 1994), especially Chapter 6, ‘Signs Taken for 4 Wonders’, pp.102-122. See also *JC*: p.392.

³⁷⁷ Rushdie, *op cit.* p.127.

³⁷⁸ *Zenana* or purdah for women. Fanny Parks, one of the earliest 19th century women travellers to India explains that ‘the four walls of a garden must be of such a height that no man standing on an elephant can peer over them.’ In Herbert, *op cit.*, (2011b), p.10.

³⁷⁹ See Francois-Marie Arouet Voltaire, *Candide or Optimism*. (1758). Translated and Edited by Theo Cuffe. (London: Penguin Classics, 2005). In his critique of Leibniz, Voltaire argued that the concept of cultivating our garden is more practical than Dr. Pangloss’ bland assertion that all is for the best in all possible worlds, by necessity.

³⁸⁰ *DS*: 443.

³⁸¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp.176-8.

together by the key themes of familiarity and estrangement, silence and garrulousness, love and betrayal that lie at the heart of Scott's search for a principled voice in his mature work.³⁸²

Gardening at Rose Cottage.

No stranger could fail to be captivated by the sounds, sights and scents of Rose Cottage garden. Shimmering in the hush of the mid-day haze of heat, it is the epitome of the well-ordered English garden transplanted overseas with its

potted shrubs on the balustrade and ... immaculately cut lawn in which oval and rectangular beds of roses were set to provide infinite pleasure to the eye, rest to the mind and balm to the soul.³⁸³

Garden and bungalow flow seamlessly into one another via the gaily decked veranda that is alive with bougainvillea, azaleas and wisteria in the wet season.

There the stranger meets Mabel, the matriarch of Pankot's tiny hill-top cantonment and her newly arrived paid companion, penniless ex-missionary Barbie Batchelor. A woman of no political savoir-faire, Barbie's voice reigns supreme in this novel. We will also renew our acquaintance with Rose Cottage's occupants-to-be on Mabel's death, Sarah and Susan, daughters of Colonel Layton, Commander of the Pankot Rifles, at that time a P.O.W. in Germany, his wife Mildred, discreetly on the drink and given to loveless coupling with the regiment's adjutant, Lieutenant Coley, and the irrepressible Aunt Fenny who, like many of Scott's older women, cannot still her tongue.

Barbie, though, is the character that Scott found hardest to evoke, but in whom he invested the tenderest of sensibilities as well as the agonies of doubt: about her religious belief, the British presence in India, and the tragedy of lives committed to the service of an Empire whose moral bankruptcy could no longer be disguised.³⁸⁴ There the stranger finds repeated those curious notes of sourness in his representation of older women that have escaped the ear of even Scott's harshest gender critics for whom the silenced *sati* rather than the spinster has been their main target.³⁸⁵ Consider this metaphor:

... she (Barbie) was the kind of person who cried out to be used, like a cow with a full udder moaning for the herdsman to lead her to the pail.³⁸⁶

³⁸² Tedesco, op cit.

³⁸³ TS: p.28.

³⁸⁴ Hilary Spurling, op cit.p.147, quotes the comment of Scott's friend, Peter Green: 'There was a hell of a lot of Barbie in Paul – he was always drawn to the inarticulate and dispossessed – like Shakespeare's *Katherine of Aragon*, "a most Poore Woman and a stranger/ In your dominions."'

³⁸⁵ Loomba, op cit., p.195.

³⁸⁶ TS: p 67.

It is not the only false note. There are other references throughout the text to 'withered faces', 'unused breasts' and 'scrawny necks' that are puzzling to one of Scott's sensibilities. But it is precisely those inconsistencies that make a writer's voice interesting.³⁸⁷ They echo his fondness for one of Emerson's adages: 'foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds.'³⁸⁸ No account can be simultaneously consistent and complete.

And Barbie, perhaps, takes us closest to Scott's own moral voice. Listen, for example, to the way that she first comes across her new employer, Mabel, a Colonel's wife, busy at work in the garden.

Barbie's first view of her was of an elderly shapeless woman, wearing muddy grey slacks, an orange cotton blouse whose sleeves and collar had been ripped out to afford more freedom ... She had seemed unwilling to be distracted from the job she was doing: grubbing out weeds from one of the rose beds, a task she performed without gloves, kneeling on the grass on an old rubber hot water bottle stuffed (as Barbie discovered later) with discarded much-darned cotton stockings.³⁸⁹

In one way, their meeting is prosaic. In another prophetic in the sense that Scott always alerts readers to the dangers of taking things at their face value. Mabel not only embodies those innocent moral practices that shaped and re-shaped the contours of the English garden for owners powerful enough to indulge their natural inclinations.³⁹⁰ Clearly, there is nothing strange in being a working mem. After all, the British conquest brought the 'Western' ideal of moral improvement to its labours. Whilst she devotes herself to the finer arts of pruning and splicing, she leaves the heavier work of digging to her garden *mali*, Aziz, as was considered right and proper. And as we've seen, Scott was preoccupied, if not obsessed with the question of meaningful work as the key to preserving one's humanity.³⁹¹ To be deprived of it was to assault one's integrity. Memories of Kipling's verse carried a particular resonance for him.

Our England is a garden and gardens are not made

By singing – 'Oh how beautiful' and sitting in the shade'.³⁹²

³⁸⁷ SO: A reference to Lucy, p.228 which is repeated, p.248.

³⁸⁸ Emerson, op cit., p.24.

³⁸⁹ TS: p.20.

³⁹⁰ Carlton and Carlton, op cit.

³⁹¹ Scott spoke at some length in an unused script for a proposed TV interview with Melvyn Bragg about this. Cited in Childs, op cit., p.37. See also *MAM*, op cit., p.127.

³⁹² Rudyard Kipling, 'The Glory of the Garden', (1911), www.kipling.society.co.uk/poemsgarden.htm. Downloaded 5th October 2019.

For Barbie, too, this is God's work, a labour of love, and a tangible reminder of Britain's stewardship of the soil, if not the soul of India that finds an answering echo in her heart and is at odds with the notion of a purely destructive environmental imperialism.³⁹³ She becomes aware of the way the plants respond to Aunt Mabel's beckoning fingers: how in tune she is with the rhythm of the seasons and the natural cycle of seed, growth, flower, decay and re-growth; how well the roses have adapted to the climate, unlike some of the *Raj* women whose bloom soon fades in the harsh heat - a neat reminder of those other attempts to transplant European values wholesale that were inaudible to most Indians.

Although Barbie finds Mabel intimidating at first - 'she was such a contained person' - Barbie realizes that she

... had been afforded a glimpse of something life had denied her ... there was a sense of tranquillity here, of serenity, which someone like herself might enter and be touched by, lightly if not deeply.³⁹⁴

The tender seeds of intimacy and love between them, such as the touch of Mabel's arm, the half-heard 'Gillian Waller' on Mabel's lips when drifting off to sleep - the sound that Scott never allows his readers to forget, although Barbie, like many of her English contemporaries, misses its significance - are never spoken of. This is the most innocent, yet deepest, of silences, a state of grace to which the 'Western' civilizing mission 'locked into political and moral denial' as Lennard puts it often turned a deaf ear.³⁹⁵

However, the appeal to gardens in Scott's work is more complex than simple nostalgia, aesthetics, or a meaningful outlet for Mabel's vocation, readily visible to any objective eye. Like much else borrowed - or appropriated - gardens are constantly being re-invented in their user's imagination. His search for a moral stance between inner and outer voice becomes darker at this point. Indeed, the appeal of gardens raises in sharp form the question of people's relation to those in authority over them, especially when movement between them is tightly controlled. Gardens, we learn in the *Quartet*, are contested places. As Scott shows, the tragedy of colonization was not just the way it dehumanized their colonized subjects. It also distorted any mutuality amongst those who did the colonizing. Recall Bauman's Freudian-inspired warning: when the stranger becomes too close small differences become frighteningly audible.³⁹⁶ In the heart of the white cantonment, penniless missionaries were getting ideas above their station, a sign

³⁹³ Grove, op cit., p.7.

³⁹⁴ *TS*: p.28.

³⁹⁵ Lennard, op cit., p.11.

³⁹⁶ Bauman, op cit., p.82.

that the unquestioned meanings by which the *Raj* legitimated its hierarchy were no longer reliable.

Here Peter Child's links between the play of human relationships in *Rose Cottage* with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise becomes a provocative symbol for the crisis of belief that had been mouldering away beneath Britain's Christianizing rhetoric since the late 19th century.³⁹⁷ Certainly, no one can deny Mabel's impeccable pedigree. Both her husbands were killed serving the *Raj*. But consider the elaborate *cordon sanitaire* that Mabel has cultivated to ward off the vicious snobbery within her own circle that at first glance seems perfectly natural. For example, her seeming indifference to the memsahib code and detachment from Pankot's formal engagements is greeted with an outward mixture of respect and regret, but rarely expressed disapproval. No rift between Mabel and Mildred has ever been voiced.³⁹⁸ Like Mrs. Moore in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, Mabel remains aloof.

But there are also signs that Mabel is gently exploiting her encroaching deafness, filtering out the unwanted tittle-tattle of the stream of visitors who come to the cottage to check on whether the Sahib code is still being correctly articulated, given the presence of her new paying guest. In doing so, she might let some air into the tight-lipped protocol of military address and comportment that was *de rigueur* amongst her circle.

To be sure, there are the not un-welcome visits of Susan, Sarah, and their dog Panther, whose howls need pacifying. With other visitors, though, Mabel seems content to let Barbie fill the empty silences that often occur with her nervous 'talk, talk, talk', delivered in that 'carrying schoolroom voice' that never knows when to stop, a habit that betrays her modest origins in a way that no amount of childhood elocution lessons can disguise.³⁹⁹ Indeed, Mabel appears not to hear 'the little silences that used to fall like miniscule drops of water from the roof of an underground cave into a pool a long way below' when Barbie embarks on stories about her mother's penury and her father's gambling, indicative perhaps of the casual cruelty of one who has never felt the need to impress.⁴⁰⁰ A strange companion then, for one of Mabel's position, an unfamiliarity emphasized by Barbie's evident intention to stay – and, unknown both to the family and to Barbie, Mabel's wish to provide her with an annuity when she died.

What is inexcusable, though, is the rumour that she donated money anonymously to the widows of those Indians who had been butchered at Amritsar, not to the

³⁹⁷ Peter Childs, op cit., p. 11, and p.42.

³⁹⁸ TS: p.40.

³⁹⁹ TS: p.73.

⁴⁰⁰ TS: p.23.

socially acceptable General Dyer fund.⁴⁰¹ The rumour, if rumour it was, serves as a gentle rebuke from Rose Cottage's military matriarch that India is no longer a subject race to be ruled over as of right. With this single vocal gesture, Scott shows how deeply divided British-Indian society was at the time over Dyer's conduct. Although forcibly retired by the new Delhi government, he was never court martialled, although the *British Morning Post* raised more than £26,000 towards his defence in the House of Lords.⁴⁰²

However, a woman of Mabel's authority could have raised her voice where it mattered. Instead, her silence has the reverse effect. Adaptable though Rose Garden is, its soil is not fertile enough to cultivate the radical militancy that demanded a hearing. Mabel, we learn is complicit in refusing to directly undermine the illusion of permanence that her presence embodies. As Scott notes, 'those tender conspiracies of silence may engender ignorance, always a dangerous thing'.⁴⁰³

The surface forms of harmony so pleasing to the eye at Rose Cottage might have continued as usual had not Mabel died. This is not unexpected at her age. But it is the way she dies that is telling, without so much as a sigh in her garden chair, leaving Susan, heavily pregnant and hovering on the brink of madness to discover the body. Using the power of free indirect speech that makes the ethnographic stranger complicit in evaluating the event in retrospect Scott recaptures the response to Mabel's apparent lack of forethought in his final volume:

It would have been better if there had been some warning, if old Mabel had cried out or fallen or at least shown some signs of being unwell; instead of which she had simply stopped tending the plants on the balustrade and sat down in a chair close to the one Susan was lying on, and 'given up the ghost'.⁴⁰⁴

Whether this is Mildred, the *Raj* women of Pankot or one of today's readers articulating that tremor of resentment at a departure that failed to announce its intentions properly is a moot point. Nevertheless, the fact that the matter is raised at all is in line with Scott's broader critique of those 'with a readiness to withdraw from the problems of the modern world' – nowhere more so, he claimed, than in Britain's indifference to and ignorance of India's concerns at the time that helped

⁴⁰¹ *TS*: p.138.

⁴⁰² Lennard, *op cit.*, p.30.

⁴⁰³ *MAM*, *op cit.*, pp.76; 119.

⁴⁰⁴ *DS*: p.488.

imperialism to thrive, although his position here may be over-stated.⁴⁰⁵ Broadly true of the electorate, it was less so of some labour politicians of the time.⁴⁰⁶

But to return to the matter of Mabel's burial. In one of the most brutal scenes of the whole tetralogy, Scott shows how alive he was to the experience of those on the margins losing command and control of their voice, as savage as any that surrounded relations between the races. Mabel's casual remark that she would only return to Ranpur to be buried in St. Luke's Church next to her husband is not recorded in her will. The stranger eavesdrops on Barbie pleading with Mildred to honour Mabel's spoken pledge,

Please, please don't bury her in the wrong grave. Not that, not that ... you must listen to what I have to say ... Otherwise she'll never rest. Never, never. She'll haunt me ...⁴⁰⁷

only for Barbie to find that her lips were numb, incapable of forming the words. Every syllable only fuels Mildred's contempt. Even Child's analysis of the Fall fails to do justice to the savagery of Mildred's 'crawling order'.⁴⁰⁸ Banished from the cottage with the words 'You were born with the soul of a parlour maid and a parlour-maid is what you've remained', Barbie is bereft, her supplication painful to modern ears as betrayal follows betrayal.⁴⁰⁹

Mabel is no 'Jeptha' to be wafted gently to the skies.⁴¹⁰ Even if her instructions are on record Mildred has no intention of sticking to the rules such is the absurdity of transferring a body several hundred miles away by train in the heat. In an orgy of destruction not unlike that of General Dyer at Jallianwallah Bagh she commits a rape of her own by tearing down the potted plants on Rose Cottage balustrade, ordering the garden to be turned into a tennis court and renamed '12 Upper Club Road'. As Rubin nicely puts it, once 'a universal symbol of love and innocence' Mabel's garden becomes a site of conflict, responding only to the 'competitive bounce of a tennis ball'.⁴¹¹ A single incident, of course. But multiplying such incidents a thousand times, Scott found in Mildred's vengeance a deliberate return to the harsh colonial edges of 'them' and 'us', and a refusal to acknowledge the rumble of dissent in the air that Scott considered was part of Britain's failure in

⁴⁰⁵ Personal communication Dr. Florian Stadler. Some left-wing politicians such as Lord Fenner Brockway campaigned vigorously for Indian independence rather than Dominion status and protested at the imprisonment of Gandhi and Nehru. Similarly both Attlee and Stafford Cripps had visited India, in 1929 and 1942 respectively, to better understand its political problems. See also Moore, op. cit., p.190.

⁴⁰⁶ Sanghera, op. cit., pp.196-200.

⁴⁰⁷ TS: p. 243.

⁴⁰⁸ One of the 'fancee punishments' ordered by General Dyer in 1919 where Indians had to crawl on all fours past the spot where the white missionary, Marcella Sherwood, was attacked.

⁴⁰⁹ TS: p. 242.

⁴¹⁰ An aria from Handel's oratorio, '*Jeptha*' 'Waft her, Angels, to the Skies', (1756) HWV70.

⁴¹¹ Rubin, op cit., p 137.

India. Repetition and variation throughout ensure that this vocal line is unmistakable.

The tempo of the novel then accelerates as Scott exploits the emotional pull of suffering, charting Barbie's dizzying descent into purgatory and her loss of faith in a God that is as profound as her disillusionment with the *Raj* mission itself. The descent could easily have become sentimental had not Scott been superbly in control of the tragedy of being vocally strangled. In a blistering scene, Barbie is exposed to the pitiless charity of Clarissa Paplow, the vicar's wife, where any expression of grief beyond the prison-like walls of her room meets with the reproof: 'Crying in a happy home ... is like untidiness in a neat one and is a worry to God.'⁴¹²

Barbie's fall from Paradise again links fictional detail with factual events to heighten the credibility of Scott's moral voice as she discovers Mabel's body lying on a mortuary slab. Here again is that reference to vocal orifices. Munch-like, Mabel's mouth is open, but it emits 'a wail of pain and terror',⁴¹³ like the image of a young girl, her open mouth choked with debris from the Quetta earthquake in 1935, the stranger learns .⁴¹⁴ Finally, Barbie contracts pneumonia careering downhill in a *tonga* from Rose Cottage in the pouring rain, clutching her one remaining claim to personhood, her trunk. Her voice, which had once been her pride and joy 'cracks on the consonants, crumbles on the vowels.'⁴¹⁵ Virtually speechless, she is incarcerated in a Samaritan hospital room, her protest limited to stabbing obscenities, pen on notepad, to the nurses. Estranged from everything she has once known and loved, her loss of voice becomes a fundamental form of oppression and suffering.

Thereafter, roses and their thorns, those symbols of pleasure and pain return at various points to haunt Barbie's memories: that carefully arranged bowl by Mabel's bedside; the cast-off blooms lying neglected in the church after her funeral; and finally, the bunch of yellow roses that Sarah brings from the garden to visit her in hospital. At first their perfume mocks the croak of her voice. Sound and scent are momentarily fused together to amplify her desolation. Scott's phrase 'The roses trembled as the fractured sounds hit them' is neatly juxtaposed with Barbie's homely adage, 'To be without a voice is like being a painter without sight, a musician without hearing'.⁴¹⁶

That Barbie stops speaking altogether before her end, convinced that she has never brought any Indian child closer to her God, is a poignant reminder of the fact

⁴¹² *TS*: p.265.

⁴¹³ *TS*: p.238.

⁴¹⁴ *TS*: p.255.

⁴¹⁵ *TS*: p.334.

⁴¹⁶ *TS*: p.339.

that the Christianizing mission in India in which the English garden played a key part could no longer justify the British presence. Worse, it had been an impertinence to try. 'This has been our mistake. We are only visitors here. That's why God hasn't followed us', Barbie said earlier.⁴¹⁷ Playing on the quixotic relation between spirituality and violence, Scott is driving home the critique of imperial hubris, just as he did with *Lady Manners* in Chapter 2.⁴¹⁸ So, the timing of Barbie's death – August 6th, 1945 - is not accidental. It is the day the Americans dropped their first nuclear bomb on Hiroshima when the world awoke to a deafening silence and a new imperial order under the mushroom cloud of Pax Atomica. Marking the high point in the tetralogy, the deaths symbolize the failure of the liberal ideal according to M.M. Mahood, a resolution that seemed plausible at the time, but as Scott intimates cannot entirely satisfy.⁴¹⁹

I think this is as far as Child's analogy can take us. Bleak though Scott's moral appraisal here might be, Rubin claims that 'redemptive elements constantly assert themselves' through the gift of love, or *agape*, the kind of love 'that defies the generally accepted myths that have attempted to silence it.'⁴²⁰ Sarah's visit is pregnant with the unspoken affection that lies between them, intuitively responding to Barbie's hope that she can see beyond the yearning to touch condemned by Mildred as 'un-natural' and

... hear beyond the senseless, ceaseless chatter, see right down to the despair but also beyond to the terrific thing that really is in me, the joy I would find in God and which she would find in life.⁴²¹

These are unworldly terms in which to cast Scott's unlikely philosopher whose moral dilemmas have peopled this part of the tetralogy. Haswell's claim that Barbie is not diminished by her plight is a credible note on which to leave her, but her further insistence that she 'reaches a state of grace' is perhaps an inference too far.⁴²² Barbie may only have been a visitor. But without that visit, without directly sharing in the experiences of those who were living out the dissolution of the *Raj* she would never have understood the possibilities of meaningful relations with others. I believe that it is Barbie's continual search for that elusive spiritual union with the other that is at stake, not its attainment as in *Paradise Regained*.

Which brings me to my second setting, that of the bedraggled garden leased to Lucy and Tusker Smalley, a retired couple who have hung on in diminished

⁴¹⁷ TS: p.283.

⁴¹⁸ Letter to Francine Weinbaum, 22.11.1975. In Haswell, (2011), op cit.

⁴¹⁹ Mahood, op cit., p.249.

⁴²⁰ Rubin, op cit., p. 150.

⁴²¹ TS: pp.334, 339.

⁴²² Haswell, (2002) op cit., p.252

circumstances after Indian Independence with their one remaining servant, Ibrahim, a setting that Scott detailed in his final novel of the *Raj*, *Staying On*.

The Smalleys and Their Red Canna Lilies

In contrast to the outward harmony and homely virtues to which the stranger is first attuned at Rose Cottage, the contested nature of the Smalleys' gardens twenty years on is audible right from the start. In the 1960's power reversals were too new to have taken root, and their ambiguity often left those caught in their grip exposed and vulnerable. This time, though, Scott's voice is different. The angry bitterness he deploys in the *Quartet* has been replaced with the lighter tones of domestic tragicomedy in what Jacqueline Bannerjee terms 'a final audit' where Scott finds both acceptance and 'a degree of closure' in his search for the ties that bind.⁴²³ Whether this assessment rings true or not will I hope become clear.

The Smalleys are mentioned briefly in the *Quartet*, but have no dramatic function there, other than to remark upon Lucy's sterling service as a shorthand writer for the Pankot Ladies' Club committee meetings.⁴²⁴ At first, there is little sign that Lucy's voice is key to the whole tragicomedy. The sound of their surname, the 'Smalleys', contrasts absurdly with Lucy's maiden name 'Lucy Little', which in turn plays havoc with her mother's maiden name, 'Large', all of which suggest a life of little significance. Who would notice if the triangle player in a Mahler symphony missed a beat? Scott takes the tease further. According to one of the *Raj* mems at the time, 'Mrs. Smalley had an intimate knowledge of the affairs of the lower deck' just as nature intended.⁴²⁵ Were it not for the fact that she is one of Scott's over-articulate women with whom he claimed he had an affinity, there she would have stayed. Much like Barbie she cannot still her tongue. But as we shall see, both Lucy and Tusker have a wider repertoire of instruments at their disposal than a stranger might suppose.

Since Partition things have changed. The Smalleys are forced to deal with the aspirations of a rising Indian lower middle-class in the form of their predatory neighbours: Mrs. Lila Bhoolabhoy, self-styled 'Ownership', and her poor relation of a husband. A monstrous mound of flab, Mrs. Bhoolabhoy is evoked in Dickensian terms to mock the crass materialism of post 1947 entrepreneurship, whereas Mr. Bhoolabhoy, condemned to mouth her orders like a ventriloquist's dummy, can only summon up the lesser virtues of 'Management with Goodwill'.⁴²⁶ Such is Scott's skill that we laugh with enjoyment, not malice at their pretensions. But they are instrumental in Tusker's downfall. The novel both begins and ends with his death from a massive coronary, his hand outstretched over the red canna lilies

⁴²³ Bannerjee, op cit., p.74.

⁴²⁴ *TS*: p.334.

⁴²⁵ *TS*: p.57.

⁴²⁶ Most likely a conscious echo of Fielding in E.M. Forster's *Passage to India*. See also *SO*: p.118.

clutching Mrs. Bhoolahoy's Notice to Quit. All the while, Lucy is having a blue rinse in the Seraglio room at the Shiraz hotel, an ironic reference to the way Britain sleep-walked into Partition, according to earlier historians such as John Seeley whom Scott may have consulted,⁴²⁷ its love-affair with India a thing of the past.⁴²⁸

Armed with this foreknowledge, Scott invites the stranger to circle around the imagined contrast between the 'Western' civilizing mission bent on correcting Indian passivity and the struggle to control a garden plot whose vegetation has run amok, 'the way Indians like their gardens to be – jungly' Lucy thinks to herself.⁴²⁹ Listen to her vocal longhand that is comically at odds with the Pitman shorthand outlines recorded and transcribed earlier in life for the Pankot Ladies' Club committee minutes:

Whatever he says, Sahib would not like to see the gardens go jungly. In any case, I do not wish it to go jungly. I have no intention of letting it go jungly.⁴³⁰

In fact, the tension between tragedy and high comedy in the novel hangs on the tongue-in-cheek play between such entanglements and the Smalleys' urge to remain aloof, not just from their neighbours, but from each other. That Lucy and Tusker have said little to each other of any consequence over the years is a matter of profound sadness, so Lucy confesses in one of her imaginary conversations with Turner, their forthcoming visitor, a stranger who never quite arrives. 'His silence is his silence, and my loquacity is my loquacity, but they amount to the same thing,' she says with characteristic bluntness. 'I can't hear what he is thinking, and he doesn't hear what I am saying. So, we are cut off from one another.'⁴³¹

Unimaginable to a woman of Lucy's times that the phrase 'I love you' should be tossed around so carelessly by future generations.

If their love is uncommunicated – if not incommunicable - there is at least tacit agreement between Lucy and Tusker on this one point. The jungle symbolizes all that is uncivilized, closer to nature than to culture. Consider, for example, the maddeningly metronomic call of the coppersmith bird, beating time to itself, or the howling jackals waiting for the kill in the hills beyond, images that Scott often uses to suggest parallel but disconnected worlds.

But the sounds unsettle Lucy. Just as the manager at the British-Indian Electrical Company had snickered to Hari Kumar when he applied for a job: 'Where are you from laddie? Straight down from a tree?', so a 'jungly' garden can signal only one

⁴²⁷ Dirks, *op cit.*, (2006), p.25 – a view contested by contemporary historians.

⁴²⁸ The Seraglio is that area of a Muslim household which houses its concubines; and 'Shiraz' is the equivalent of sweet.

⁴²⁹ SO: p. 91.

⁴³⁰ SO: p.229.

⁴³¹ SO: p.62.

thing: the Smalleys have 'gone native', a loss of face that drives Tusker to tears, perched on the one place he can air his grievances, their thunderbox of a toilet.⁴³² The stranger utters a word of foreboding: unless the grass is cut and the canna lilies watered, Tusker's survival is doubtful given the state of his blood pressure. But he can no longer afford a garden *mali* on his meagre pension, a matter of no concern to Mrs. Bhoolabhoy. 'Ownership' has other ideas: the Smalley's Lodge and garden are ripe for Development. When there is profit at stake cultivation is over-ruled.

The previous section has emphasized how the English garden was the perfect setting in which to eaves-drop on the relationships white-on-white that unravelled within the colonizing British hill-top cantonments but dealt only briefly with those the British settlers knew best: namely their Indian servants and gardeners. Let me expand on this question to explore what these partial intimacies reveal about the imperial rhetoric when the formal structure of the *Raj* has been dismantled. How does Scott pursue his search for an ethical stance through the everyday predicaments that are unravelled here but which also speak to wider public concerns?

Scott plays imaginatively with the subversive master/mistress-servant relations which are the stuff of life at the Lodge, a nice rejoinder to the argument that only Indians have the 'right' to write about other Indians. Relations between the Smalleys and their one remaining servant, Ibrahim are potentially volatile, unlike the stable wage-labour relationship between Mabel and Aziz. Ibrahim is a servant of the Old School and exchanges letters with his erstwhile employers, though his request for a job 'back home' meets with silence. But he still regrets the change from English to Indian rule. In fact, he finds that Tusker, 'the most isshovanist pig' was no different from his predatory brother-in-law 'and all the other Muslim, Brahmin, Western Punjabis, Bengalis and Rajput bugger-fellows'.⁴³³ Nature, one might say, abhors a vacuum.

The stranger hears how Lucy hatches a plot with Ibrahim to find (and fund) a *mali* substitute for the gardener Mrs. Bhoolabhoy has sacked, and together they conduct 'Operation Mali' with all the meticulousness of a military manoeuvre, a collusion that complicates any neat divide between 'us' and 'them'. In due course, Joseph, the new *mali* arrives on the scene, and a temporary truce descends upon the household.

Unsurprisingly there is a subtle pecking order within the servant hierarchy too. Servants working on the outside were always considered inferior to those working

⁴³² JC: p.246.

⁴³³ SO: p.222.

indoors, according to Eugenia Herbert.⁴³⁴ At first, Joseph, whose religious affiliations include a mix of Christianity and Hinduism applies himself with alacrity, alternately seducing Lucy with ‘the delightful purring sound of the mower’ and the sight of ‘grass sprayed from the blades like a green fountain’ as he trims the lawn.⁴³⁵ Self-appointed metaphysicians, Ibrahim and Joseph debate in idiomatic English their responsibility to the soil, although Joseph’s is clearly the more sophisticated intellect. But they are still servants – Indian servants. The stunted syntax is sound enough as Scott leaves any reference to the singsong Bengali ‘*Babu*’ cadences that figure in Hari Kumar’s account of his dealings with the British to the reader’s imagination. Ibrahim wonders why Joseph is prodding the lawn with a fork, to which Joseph replies:

To make breathe.

Ibrahim: You telling me grass breathes?

Joseph: All living things breathe.⁴³⁶

For Joseph, the lawn is no blank slate awaiting the call of the *Raj*’s civilizing mission, but animate, an idea that a ‘Western’ stranger might consider quaint, incompatible with scientific rationality. Remember Merrick’s studied contempt for ‘the pathetic fallacy’ in the previous chapter. When anthropomorphic metaphors always reveal a strong relationship between self and the natural world Scott does not allow us to hear whether he is chronicling the appeal of a primitive exoticism or unsettling it, such was the extent of British indifference to an indigenous conservationist ethic.⁴³⁷ What is clear, though, is that Joseph is doing a little civilizing of his own. The grass sings under his ministrations, just as Mabel’s hybrid roses have responded to her touch. As for Joseph’s presence, though, a conspiracy of silence reigns. Tusker is impervious to his garden’s transformation. Joseph might as well be invisible. Scott gives full reign to his love of absurdity in the following scene:

Day after day, while Tusker sat on the veranda, Joseph slaved away at the grass in full view of the master of the house who was now busily engaged in writing in an exercise book ... Nothing was said even when Joseph was kneeling in the bed of canna lilies.⁴³⁸

Of course, Tusker is aware of the ruse, recording it laced with a familiar dose of expletives in the notebook he is compiling for posterity. Those are the ‘sacred

⁴³⁴ Herbert, (2011) op cit., p.301.

⁴³⁵ SO: p.60.

⁴³⁶ SO: p. 61.

⁴³⁷ Grove, op cit., p.3. See also Rubin, op cit., who refers to ‘the near mystical bond with the natural world that isn’t part of British mentality’, p.111.

⁴³⁸ SO: p.82.

phrases' that are never to be used by the lower-class servants, Ibrahim mocks *sotto voce* to Joseph.⁴³⁹ But like the situation with Aziz at Rose Cottage, the reader is never privy to what Joseph thinks of the un-natural silence. He simply re-doubles his efforts so that the sound of the mower drowns out everything else. Initially I interpreted this as another 'Boxer', the donkey in Orwell's *Animal Farm* whose response to oppression is to work ever harder.⁴⁴⁰ None of the other animals speak up as Boxer's strength wears out, until eventually he is carted off to the knackers' yard.

I hadn't listened carefully enough. When sound often conveys meaning more immediately than any visual stimulus no such compliance is intended here. The dulcet tones of the mower that have enchanted Lucy earlier begin to rasp on her ears: there isn't the money to pay for such devoted labour.⁴⁴¹ What began as a gentleman's agreement between mistress and servant acquires a menacing tone. Joseph is poaching, but such is the powerful ambiguity of mimicry that the reader is never quite sure whether Scott is simply re-enacting the well-worn stereotype of the devious Indian servant, or successfully staging Joseph's own mutiny. Mimicry is, as Bette London notes, 'always incomplete, poised precariously between subversive mastery and submissive consent'.⁴⁴² For me this is precisely the point: Scott is laying down the gauntlet to his unknown reader, inviting us to put our own judgements to the test.

Yet as the previous section showed, gardens can also heal the rifts between people, if only momentarily, by linking together past and present. The sights, sounds and scents of the carefully mown lawn or the herbaceous border have the power to evoke distant memories that are more transformative than merely bringing them out for an airing. The stranger happens upon Lucy wandering in the adjacent churchyard of St. John's to find her enveloped in a sound so soft it barely registers at first. 'Snick-snick'. Again 'Snick-snick'.⁴⁴³ Lucy's attention drifts. It isn't the call of the coppersmith bird beating time to itself, but the sound of her father trimming the hedge in their rectory garden in England, the 'snick-snick' of his shears in tune with the 'click-cluck' of her twin brother's bat against a cricket ball.

Such is the significance of this momentary fusion of past and present that Scott gives it elaborate typographical attention on the page. First there is a 'p' (piano) followed by a short recitative (a written paragraph), then a 'pp', (pianissimo), then another 'p' with a further recitative before the sound reaches a crescendo, 'cr'. Impossible for Lucy not to respond. In fact, in reliving those treasured relationships

⁴³⁹ SO: p.64.

⁴⁴⁰ George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (London: Secker and Warburg (1945), reprinted In *The Complete Novels of George Orwell*, 2nd ed., (London: Penguin Classics 2009).

⁴⁴¹ SO: p.67.

⁴⁴² London, op cit., p.126.

⁴⁴³ SO: p.146.

in her father's garden she can grasp their significance for her present predicament.⁴⁴⁴

Forgetting the servant problem for a moment though - it is after all Joseph clipping the grass surrounding the graves - she runs into Mr. Bhoolahoy to discover they have been thinking about each other, though along different lines. If Lucy has an ear for the past, Mr. Bhoolahoy has an eye on the future. Does the 'snick-snick' presage the arrival of his wife's bulldozers to demolish his precious Smith's Hotel? They are joined by the 'click' of another instrument. The scene has caught the eye of a stray tourist who captures the moment for posterity on his Brownie camera. Bridging the gulfs of time and space, the combination of borrowed shears and camera snap are the catalysts that momentarily bring together three people who might otherwise have little to say to each other. Such is the generative nature of the voices that gather around the English garden that Joseph's 'snick-snick' plays no small part in the unfolding tragedy.

And Scott does not disappoint. In one final gesture he gives full reign to his search for a moral stance by subverting the stereotypes of benevolent mistress and grateful servant that helps to counter the criticisms we met earlier. Joseph's 'snick-snick' reveals something else, namely Mabel's tombstone, the inscription on it recorded for posterity. Her voice lives on symbolically even after her death and gives Lucy the chance to re-establish her authority with an English lesson for Joseph. 'Mah-Bel', he parrots in obedience to her instructions, then again 'May bil.'⁴⁴⁵ The scene might easily be construed as an earnest endeavour to comply on Joseph's part. Reading the syllables aloud gives no hint of where the stress is to lie. I hear it as Joseph's attempt to re-invent the prescribed text in his own idiom, just as the crowd in Adela Quested's trial in *A Passage to India* takes up and transforms its rallying cry for Mrs. Moore with 'Esmis Esmoor'.⁴⁴⁶ Listen to the mock chivalry with which Scott then describes Joseph's comportment:

How straight his gaze was! How devoted and grateful his look. How gallant the gesture he made, tucking his shears behind him so that they did not constitute a threat or source of danger to her. How lithely he moved, going with no nonsense and yet chivalrous awareness of her presence towards one of the graves. How touching the way he stopped and stood to one side of it, giving her precedence...⁴⁴⁷

Whether Lucy is deaf to Joseph's sycophancy or secretly enjoying her moment of revenge for that mower incident earlier is an ironic acknowledgement of the difficulties of ever getting complex intentions right. But Scott comes as close as he

⁴⁴⁴ Haswell, (2002), op cit., p.49.

⁴⁴⁵ SO: p.150.

⁴⁴⁶ E.M. Forster, (1924/2005) op cit., p.211.

⁴⁴⁷ SO: p.149.

can, and the moral stance only emerges retrospectively. It is left to Sarah to realise that 'Mabel, the rose garden and the grave that Lucy discovers are all intertwined' in more complex and contradictory ways than can ever be imagined by simple visual divisions between ruler and ruled under the *Raj*.⁴⁴⁸

In this final section let me turn to the Smalleys' relationship with their new Eurasian neighbours and link it again to Scott's search for a voice in Emerson's notion of 'the moral drift of history' that we heard earlier. We know that gardens take on different tones and evoke different meanings over time. So, the stranger who returns to the garden where it all began but is transformed in the process, may help us understand the fluctuating relationship between colonial settlers, old and new, and how reluctantly the British accepted the formal dissolution of the *Raj* as an opportunity to forge more respectful allegiances.⁴⁴⁹ And for those critics who accuse Scott of being an imperial apologist, it is worth remembering that when he returned to India himself in the 1960's he was dismayed to find that an informal segregation bar still existed between white British ex-pats and Indians.

Dropped almost imperceptibly into the novel is a reference again to Colonel Menektara and his wife, Cocoo, one of the Smalleys' new post-Independence Indian acquaintances now living at Rose Cottage.⁴⁵⁰ The garden that Lucy has always admired has been transformed. The Menektaras have removed the tennis court, restored the garden and re-stocked it with the English hybrid tea roses that Mabel loved, re-inventing the garden in their own image. This time the garden is open to the Pankot circle to celebrate the Hindu *holi* festival of fertility where children sing and dance, showering each other with brightly coloured powders. Snorting at the idea of a fertility rite, Tusker nevertheless plunges into the fray, capering about like a child to the amusement of the new post-imperial bystanders, until he is covered in multi-coloured powder himself. The Empire in reverse? But familiarity has gone too far, the time for more friendly camaraderie long since gone. Those heady moments of immersion for Tusker precipitate a near-fatal heart attack.

The tempo of the novel quickens, this time with brutal results that bring the fate of Barbie, the Smalleys and the dissolution of Empire together. The 'snick-snick' of those missing shears catch Mrs. Bhoolabhoy's attention, sealing the Smalley's fate. A 'Tit-for-tat', she snaps. Mr. Bhoolabhoy is despatched to deliver the *coup de grace*, a notice for the Smalleys to quit the lodge and its garden surrounds. Couched in absurd legalese, the words are deliberately capitalized to mock their un-speakability. Perhaps, then, it is fitting for Tusker to meet his nemesis in the

⁴⁴⁸ *DS*: p.377.

⁴⁴⁹ *MAM*, op cit., p.99.

⁴⁵⁰ *SO*: p.172.

garden, one hand clutching the offending eviction order, his body sprawled in mute protest over the wilting canna lilies.

Lucy is left to lament his passing, longing not for the home of Hari Kumar's dreams, but for re-union with Tusker in death. Voicing that universal terror of abandonment, she combines a familiar biblical adage remembered from Sunday school with her characteristic over-emphasis in the final part of the book:

But now, until the end, I shall be alone, whatever I am doing, here as I feared, amid the alien fields of corn, waking, sleeping, alone for ever and ever and I cannot bear it but mustn't cry and must must get over it but don't for the moment see how, so with my eyes shut, Tusker, I hold out my hand, and beg you, Tusker, beg, beg you to take it and take me with you ...⁴⁵¹

There is nothing 'little' about such a *cri de coeur*. For Scott, even the most unassuming characters have a dignity that cannot be repressed. A stranger might have rested content on such a concluding note. But turning again to Jacqueline Bannerjee's claim that the novel represents a degree of acceptance on Scott's part, the stranger finds that he deliberately disrupts the imperative to tie everything up neatly, intimating perhaps that imperialism is always unfinished business. We find Lucy, armed with the only love letter she has ever received from Tusker – he even calls her 'Luce' – that explains his affection for and emotional investment in India, even though the couple has never achieved the pukka sahib status that she always craved, reflecting:

However friendly you were with Indians of your own generation, the generation that had experienced all the passion and prejudices, there was something in that relationship, a distant and diminishing but not yet dead echo of the sound of the tocsin.⁴⁵²

Her continued snobbery has a familiar ring to it. But consider what happens when taken-for-granted assumptions are disturbed. A few pages before the end of the novel, Lucy silences those funereal chimes with the remark: 'I shouldn't be ungenerous with my thoughts ... In the end, this is what it comes to: that one is into the Indian-Christian scene and into the Eurasian scene. Perhaps it will make a change.'⁴⁵³ No throw-away remark can better voice the push and pull between intimacy – the longing to belong - and estrangement, the fear that too intimate a connection with those who are 'not quite not white' might undermine her own integrity. Condescension apart, for Lucy to refuse the Menektaras' hand of

⁴⁵¹ SO: p.255.

⁴⁵² SO: p.245.

⁴⁵³ SO: p. 245.

friendship will not only be an insult. It is also a counsel of despair. Splendid isolation is no longer sustainable if it ever was.

In those few contradictory passages, Lucy's voice acquires the range of imperial experiences in which grief, ingrained snobbery, privilege, estrangement and exile are closely entangled. I suggest that Scott's account of her can best be heard as an honouring of lives that apparently don't matter. Lucy knows that she will endure whatever there is to be endured – with self-possession and dignity, for which, as Scott notes, there must be a degree of mutual recognition. For example, Ibrahim respects her wish not to grieve openly in front of him. Besides, there is the garden that Tusker has loved to show Turner, her forthcoming visitor who has been the recipient of her imaginary conversations. Such were the words of M.A.K., the Muslim congressman after his release from prison. Gardens cannot be left untended: they need to be actively cultivated – re-imagined, if you like, if they are to thrive.

Reprise

In exploring the way Rose Cottage and the Smalleys' Lodge gardens are worked into his characters' sensory imagination Scott's moral voice becomes clearer.

Scott shows that gardens are rarely the innocent practices often claimed. They also echo the darker tones of Empire that had such an unsettling effect on those caught up in its dissolution and echo his regret that their promise – of human beings, like plants, co-mingling and deriving sustenance from one another – rarely materialized in practice. Eugenia Herbert's notion of 'the soft face of garden imperialism' allows the stranger to register the ways that gardens have both shaped and been shaped by the endemic racism and ferocious snobbery of imperial and post-imperial life. Consider again Mildred's orgy of destruction, or Mrs Bhoolahoy's eviction order, reminiscent of Barbie's expulsion from Rose Cottage gardens, (and, of course, the Quit India movement itself). Scott's voice is not simply that of a dispassionate recorder of injustice and moral turpitude. He writes with an angry, outraged ear for the effects of vocal paralysis, literally in Barbie's case, more subtly and with unparalleled understanding of our human foibles in that of Lucy Smalley. To lose or be deliberately deprived of control of one's voice constitutes a fundamental form of suffering and oppression.

Yet there are the unmistakeable sounds of a plea for what Janis Tedesco calls 'organic unity', urging the stranger to hear and respond to the unspoken distances between people who are 'not quite not white' so that difference is generative, not divisive.⁴⁵⁴ Consider again the briefly acknowledged relationship between Lucy and Mr. Bhoolahoy evoked by the 'snick-snick' of Joseph's shears; or the unspoken affection between Mabel and Aziz, Mabel and Barbie. What is most important to

⁴⁵⁴ Janis Tedesco, *op cit.* pp.195-211.

people – a mutual respect for their dignity and integrity - is rarely articulated directly. As Scott tried to put it:

... as between Britain and India, as between my own British generation and the Indian generation that corresponds with it, I see more clearly what connects than what divides ... We have both inherited it even if we personally did not make it. And in many ways, it still subtly connects us. Why should it not? It was a human experience.⁴⁵⁵

And the power of that connecting voice to reach the unknown stranger across time and space speaks to its universality. Once heard it cannot be forgotten.

⁴⁵⁵ *MAM*, op cit., p.128.

CHAPTER 5: BETWEEN THE NOTES: WHAT SCOTT'S VOICE MEANS TO ME

Addressing Scott's – and of course my own – search for an audible moral stance in his late works has been more taxing than anticipated, so I'd like to conclude on a more personal note. I cannot engage with Scott's necessarily Eurocentric account of his fictional protagonists' entanglement in imperial dissolution without some unease, not least because it posed uncomfortable questions about my own cultural background. I grew up during World War II in a conservative household that took the formal post-war dissolution of Empire, particularly the loss of Britain's Jewel in the Crown, to be a catastrophe. It was only later when studying anthropology that I started to question those childhood assumptions in my own ethnographic fieldwork, where deliberately distancing oneself from familiar surroundings puts one's own prejudices at risk.

So, the basic moral dilemma in interpreting Scott's work memorably identified by Benita Parry almost fifty years ago caught my attention to become the chief focus of this dissertation: namely how to reconcile the fact that Scott seems to be both an exacting critic of Britain's corruption and brutality under the *Raj*, yet *au fond* an imperial apologist, silently yearning for service to an ideal which had long since turned sour. On the one hand we have a voice whose register is so familiar today as to need no repeating, on the other a voice that betrays the post-colonial project to which he was precursor. Consider again the paradox in his work that symbolizes the wider contradictions within liberal humanism itself. As he said at one time:

Nothing is worse for a novelist than to see all sides of the questions and fail to support one. You must commit yourself, stick your neck out. Then will your novel say something ...⁴⁵⁶

Only to contradict himself at another:

... commitment is for the old and serene... the act of writing a novel is an act of asking questions, not answering them. A novel can't effectively be built on dogma.⁴⁵⁷

Ambivalence is hard to bear particularly when debates over Britain's colonial legacy have acquired a new urgency in contemporary politics. Every instinct is to quash its presence. Certainly, my three chosen settings and the social practices that his fictional protagonists brought to life around them show how difficult it is to

⁴⁵⁶ *MAM*, op cit., p.79.

⁴⁵⁷ Haswell, op cit., (2011), p.23; *MAM* op cit., pp.148-9.

pin Scott down. Indeed, I've come to agree with Peter Childs that he gives us no certainties and precious few answers.⁴⁵⁸

But this is not to say that Scott has no moral voice at all. Rather, Scott's vocal narrative device of the ethnographic stranger - 'the figure who comes today and stays tomorrow' - whose significance I almost missed, pointed to ways in which these paradoxes could be fruitfully re-visited. Further, linking it with the immediacy of sound and listening has turned out to be a provocative way of keeping Scott's moral voice alive. That voice turns out to be tougher than some critics have realized.

I've discovered how shrewdly Scott apprehends the babel of tongues in the stranger's reflections, allowing readers to explore the moral qualities of what his protagonists were thinking and talking about in more detail. As Boxall put it, we hear how he captures the 'rhythms and modulations not only of the voices of others but of our own voice as it sounds in our head', sensitivities that Scott felt strongly about but which generally escape the eye.⁴⁵⁹ These range from the 'puk-puk-puk' of the clerk's pen in Hari's interrogation that echoes the robotic nature of judicial inquiry under the *Raj*; to Barbie's croaky resistance at being stripped of her personhood just as Britain's army of surveyors had stripped many Indians of theirs; to Lucy's over-emphasis that renders her marginality to the Pankot 'ventriloquists' dummies' the more telling, a potent reminder of Britain's indifference to the concerns of those it governed from afar. It is the degree to which that authorial voice is audible or not that matters.

So, let me return to the key questions that have animated this dissertation and broaden their scope. I wanted to explore firstly, in what ways is Scott's voice a moral one, particularly under conditions of oppression; secondly, how the figure of the stranger brings Scott's moral voice alive; and finally, the ways in which that voice might speak to our own troubled times, including contemporary debates on imperial nostalgia and amnesia. I will deal with them under those heads which have proved to be most fertile in my search for his voice. First, the question of:

Choice and Constraint

At first, I thought that Scott's pessimism about human resilience and his constant use of the term 'victim' in facing 'the dark forces of history and circumstance' denied any possibility of moral agency or dignity to the human subject.⁴⁶⁰

Certainly, for some of Scott's protagonists, life under the *Raj* was consciously oppressive, easily discernible by any stranger. Consider again the many references to 'I can do nothing', such as Sarah's despairing cry on the railway

⁴⁵⁸ Childs, op. cit., p.17.

⁴⁵⁹ Boxall, op cit., p.20.

⁴⁶⁰ MAM op cit., p.68.

platform after Ahmed's sacrifice from the train, the prejudices that can never be openly aired except by a stranger (Merrick to Sarah in hospital), or Daphne's realization that she was powerless to save Hari.⁴⁶¹

Just as important, though, was their complicity in legitimating imperial rule that can best be heard in those silences between what is and is not spoken, for example Mabel's reluctance to openly declare her opposition to imperial rule. As Clifford Geertz, (qua Max Weber) liked to put it, 'man (sic) is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun'.⁴⁶² Liberal values such as the rule of law, 'ma-bap', or the imperative to cultivate one's garden were part of the imagined natural order of things that guaranteed their adherents' loyalty more powerfully than any overt dominance.

Yet Scott cannot leave matters there. He always returns to those chinks of freedom, 'the few cubic centimetres inside the skull' as Orwell put it, unsettling Sarah's momentary certainty, documenting Barbie's growing awareness that she had not brought any Indian children closer to her God, or gleefully egging Joseph on with his mower and shears, so that the official rhetoric of imperialism is, at least partly, subverted.⁴⁶³

Not that this debate can be resolved. My point is that whilst freedom and estrangement are closely interwoven in Scott's account, the stranger can still escape into an inner world 'to observe local conditions with an equanimity not available to insiders' as Bauman reminds us.⁴⁶⁴ Thus, being betwixt and between enables Scott to emphasize those moments of near capitulation when his key protagonists draw back, realizing how close they have come to being caught in the 'dark forces' that would entangle them: for example, Daphne's recollections in her diary of the seductive comforts of being with 'her own kind', Hari's Emersonian moment, or Sarah's recoil from Merrick's 'dark side' in hospital. In Bauman's terms, these are moments of 'authenticity' where Daphne, Ahmed and Hari maintain their dignity and power of choice, in limited but not insignificant ways

Much has been made of the efficacy or otherwise of such vocal gestures and silences by post-colonial scholars in explaining Britain's short-sighted policy moves, or the way that promises about self-determination for India never materialized – indeed the shortcomings of the whole liberal edifice of motivation and consequences that Cox critiques.⁴⁶⁵ They go to the heart of Scott's own qualms about reconciling a reforming liberalism with a paternalistic imperialism. So,

⁴⁶¹ JC: p.436.

⁴⁶² Geertz, op. cit., 1973, p.5.

⁴⁶³ George Orwell, 1984. In *The Complete Novels of George Orwell*. (First published, London: Secker and Warburg, 1949; reprinted London, Penguin Classics, 2009), p.1071.

⁴⁶⁴ Bauman op cit., p.60.

⁴⁶⁵ Cox, op cit., pp.161-172. See also Steinberg, op cit., p.126.

a particular virtue of this study has been my attention to the detailed actions and interactions of Scott's protagonists where they can best be apprehended, on the ground, although this has meant neglecting the wider range of characters and events he works with. Once heard, no stranger, not even the nameless clerk at Hari's interrogation, can-un-hear that 'j'accuse' whose moral significance continues to haunt us. Even limited powers of choice carry entailments in terms of one's responsibility for sins of commission and omission. As philosophers have it, one is still choosing not to choose even if one is convinced there is no choice.⁴⁶⁶

Scott's power as a writer stems precisely from his sensibility to these tensions as he evokes his protagonists' attitudes to the closing days of Empire - not as a set of abstract principles, but lived out via a series of reflexive judgements, some barely conscious - in everyday action and interaction with others. Living within earshot of general principles is always more complicated than simply looking up to them.

I-witnessing

Which brings me to my second point, Scott's fidelity to his craft, how he treats his characters, his subject matter, and his responsibility to future as well as past ethnographic strangers. At its best his work combines a moral commitment to individual dignity and a recognition that humiliation is the worst thing that can be inflicted on others, with an imaginative ear for the rhetorical peculiarities of his characters often found in the best fiction. The odd insensitivity apart, we know that he wrote with a generosity of spirit so that even his least appealing characters, such as Mildred Layton or Clarissa Paplow arouse our pity, even empathy. Indeed, in his evocation of Lucy Smalley no voice was so 'little' that it was not worth listening to. And whilst Scott's use of mockery was seductive, for example Guy Perron's ludicrous middle name - a poke perhaps at academic pretensions - he doesn't sneer. Indeed, he thought the act of writing might be one of the few activities that respects the humanity of those with whom we disagree.⁴⁶⁷ At best, there are passages in his texts where he tried to

... deal justly, through one or two British characters with the genuine affection for India and grief at awareness of its imminent loss in their working lives that in actual life, characterised perhaps not a few of them.⁴⁶⁸

Scott's approach to his characters, then, will always be ambivalent. Like the historian David Gilmour, he treats them as the fallible human beings that we all are, not the generalized representatives of a surveyors' record. Heard thus Sarah and Barbie's longing to be of service, or Aunt Mabel's labour of love in the garden might

⁴⁶⁶ Nina Rosenstand, 'Stories and Morals' In *Ethics, Literature, Theory: An Introductory Reader*. Ed. Stephen K. George, (ed)., (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005 2nd edition), pp.153-163. p.159.

⁴⁶⁷ MAM, op. cit., p.149.

⁴⁶⁸ MAM, op cit., p.115.

help us understand the tenacity of Britain's civilizing mission in India, its odd moments of tenderness as well as the despair that Scott felt at its many betrayals in practice. Ironically, perhaps, it is the 'wicked clarity' of Merrick's critical analysis, Scott's *duende*, that comes closest to his own voice, making his work a rich contribution to the literature of dissent – refreshing in today's febrile climate where any discussion of Britain's colonial legacy is sharply polarised.

His writing is sound in another respect. Scott had a keen sense of scholarship, of fidelity to 'the facts' of imperial dissolution as he understood them twenty years on, that speaks to the ethnographic stranger's outer voice. It was, Scott felt, his responsibility to bear ear and eyewitness to the events swirling around him in creating a version of the past in his novels that might stand the test of time.⁴⁶⁹ Indeed, his work attests to the difficulties of all serious enquiry about the imperial project.⁴⁷⁰ Just when the reader feels that Scott has a grip on the events surrounding his protagonists, the stranger interrupts, reflecting the doubts and uncertainties of our minds, our wilful misunderstanding of those happenings we have a hand in creating.

We've also seen how his even-handedness and careful weighing of words have often been mistaken for lack of commitment. But this is to mis-hear. Those awkward 'yes, buts ...' from the ethnographic stranger unsettle the monologically understood relations and situations that have preoccupied many British writers on India. It is no surprise, then, to find Merrick, the prototypical stranger among the Muzzy Guides, giving a more sympathetic account of Subhas Chandra Bose and the INA than Scott's critics give him credit for.⁴⁷¹ Indeed, it is precisely Scott's use of multi-vocality that enables the stranger to apprehend how the same events can sound so differently to different people at different times.

We may not be able to learn those lessons of history, as naively understood, but at least Scott's ear for those 'tender conspiracies of silence between a policy and its pursuit' acts as a corrective to the collective amnesia and ignorance that were manifested in Britain's turn inwards, and its post-war hostility to strangers arriving from afar that I outlined in chapter 1.⁴⁷² Forgiveness, perhaps, Scott was to write, but forgetfulness, never.⁴⁷³

Reaching Across

Which brings me to the third imperative lying at the heart of the liberal humanist dilemma that the dissolution of Empire posed for Scott: namely the tension between the moral duty to reach across to those whom we designate as strangers

⁴⁶⁹ Childs, op cit., p.59.

⁴⁷⁰ Sanghera, op. cit., p.199.

⁴⁷¹ See Letter to Francine Weinbaum, in Weinbaum op cit., p.214.

⁴⁷² *MAM*, op cit., p 119.

⁴⁷³ *MAM*, op cit., p.146.

whilst resisting the temptation to make them over into our own image. Such was Hari's dilemma as the prototypical 'brown-skinned Englishman' of Macaulay's imagination.

Scott's critics tend to be drawn to one pole or the other.⁴⁷⁴ The sense of division, isolation and alienation throughout his late novels has been palpable, Barbie's loss of voice and subsequent death a fundamental form of suffering analogous to the loss of faith in the liberal ideal. But then so have those moments of tender intimacy between people, such as the 'click-click' of Joseph's shears that momentarily bring Mr. Bhoolahboy and Lucy together, symbolizing Scott's own ability to see 'more clearly what connects than what divides.'⁴⁷⁵

However, his notion of connection was not utopian. Complete identification with others is neither possible nor is it desirable. Unless strangers are specifically invited, there will always be resistance, however earnest the compassion or the desire to alleviate suffering. And, even then, an invitation may come laced with unspoken expectations that no amount of prior ethics sensitivity training can prepare one for, as Scott learnt to his cost at Timmapuram.

Rather, I hear the stranger's voice as an active, dynamic movement between proximity and distance, belonging and estrangement, intimacy and aloofness that enables Scott's unknown reader to converse intersubjectively with his characters and their predicaments, thus extending the possibilities for social justice that underpins so much of Bauman's thinking about ambivalence.⁴⁷⁶ In Daphne's words again, Scott urged us never to lose sight of the need to extend our patience 'right up to breaking point, put ourselves out on a limb, dare other people to saw the limb off whoever they are ...'⁴⁷⁷

Scott's Contemporary Relevance:

So, what has Scott to say about our contemporary predicament? As he once put it: 'Fiction is about what never happened (but what could happen), and what is happening all the time.'⁴⁷⁸ The questions that every generation faces, whether it is contemplating the horrors of the Holocaust, the forced sterilization of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang or the genocidal expulsion of Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar - the list goes on and on - are embedded in Scott's work. Just where does personal and collective moral responsibility start and stop? With those who give the orders, those who carry them out, or those who stand silently on the side-lines? Or all of them in concert?

⁴⁷⁴ Tedesco, op cit.

⁴⁷⁵ *MAM* op cit., p.128.

⁴⁷⁶ Marotta, op. cit., p. 132

⁴⁷⁷ *JC*: 106.

⁴⁷⁸ *MAM*, op cit., p. 138.

It is tempting to think that the *Raj* can safely be consigned to the history books. However, that dark period in Britain's past is not walled in but points forward to other writers who are dealing with the post-imperial world. Might future research want to explore the links between Barbie's fall from grace and Britain's status as an occupied colony post-Brexit, however clichéd the analogy?⁴⁷⁹ Or draw out the contradictory impulses behind the record – simultaneously an instrument of empowerment in Daphne's case and one of oppression in Hari's – that may be reflected in the Black Lives Matter movement's struggle to claim a rightful voice in Britain's historiography? Does Scott's invitation to his unknown reader to confront Britain's imperial legacy with an ear to the ground have something in common with the remorseless probing of white society's racial injustices elsewhere by contemporary writers such as Toni Morrison and Claudia Rankine?

Clearly Scott's is not a moralizing voice in the sense of being didactic. It is more like Boxall's progenitive voice, one that evokes the less obvious moral conflicts, the silences characteristic of any human endeavour.⁴⁸⁰ Here I believe that Scott took the task of giving voice to the stranger as far as anyone could in revealing something unique about the relationship between inner and outer world. What he lived out was the ethical obligation to scrutinize his own prejudices about the world, Montaigne-like in his insistence that his truths were necessarily incomplete such were the ambiguities of lived experience. Whilst we may not celebrate the ambivalence that a detailed listening to Scott's moral voice on the ground has provided in this study, we may perhaps learn to work with it – a tougher exercise than anticipated.

We are left not with a paralyzing inertia, a world devoid of permanent values that characterized the nihilism of his age, but a dynamic scepticism, an energetically self-reflective form of engagement with the lives of others that is open-ended, humanitarian and relational.⁴⁸¹ In Hannah Arendt's memorable plea, the imperative to 'take our imagination visiting' the stranger can find Scott's own resolution to conjure up a momentum that he described as

... slow, sluggish, but still movement and couple it with the word moral ... to show that the movement I have in mind is a movement in what I hope is a desirable direction ... This is the bed of the river that will never, within our comprehension, reach the sea, but in spite of that, we clear the riverbed, bit by bit, to let the water through.⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁹ Sanghera, op cit., p.111.

⁴⁸⁰ Boxall, op cit., p. 37.

⁴⁸¹ Ruth Pinder, I made a similar point in my conclusion to my dissertation on George Orwell, *George Orwell: A Pukka Voice amongst the Dispossessed?* Institute of Continuing Education, University of Cambridge 2017.

⁴⁸² Arendt, op cit., pp.176-8; *MAM*, op cit., p.145.

Cavatina

By now, a stranger might have forgotten all about Parvati, Daphne's mixed-race child with whom we began. I cannot hear her voice in quite the same way as I did four years ago. Although she never speaks in the book, Parvati's voice is surprisingly persistent. Listen again to the stranger's encounter with her as she leaves the Macgregor House for her music lesson which will one day take her to sing in Europe's capitals, presenting the intricacies of a musical form which Daphne said at the beginning of my thesis was 'the only music in the world she knew that sounded conscious of breaking silence and going back into it when it was finished.'⁴⁸³

Scott reserves the softest of cadences for the young bride's song saying goodbye to her parents before leaving for her new home:

There are ragas for morning and evening. This one is for the morning. The dew is not yet off the ground. The garden is still cool. A blue-black crow with a red-yellow beak swoops from the roof of the house looking for its breakfast. Where the sunlight strikes the lawn the dew is a scattering of crystals ... the range of green is extraordinary, palest lime, bitter emerald, mid-tones, neutral tints. The textures of the leaves communicate themselves through sight to imaginary touch, exciting the finger-tips ...⁴⁸⁴

To hear a young girl equally at home amongst Indians and Europeans is, I believe, Scott's main hope for the future amongst the unreason of Partition and its aftermath. We now know from his letters that his inner dialogue with Hari Kumar and Parvati continued up until his death.⁴⁸⁵ There were rumours that Hari found a teaching job at a Government College and attended her first recital. Too much for hardened sceptics, perhaps.⁴⁸⁶ But this is to mis-hear. Unlike the tonalities of Western music, the demi-semi-tones of the raga are both in harmony with the subtle textures of the Macgregor House garden plants, and yet potentially provocative.

No words, then. Just the sound of the raga whose most urgent truths are to be found in those momentary silences between the notes.

⁴⁸³ *JC*: p.480.

⁴⁸⁴ *JC*: p.74.

⁴⁸⁵ Letter to Elizabeth Cadell, 1975, in Haswell, op cit., (2011), p. 255.

⁴⁸⁶ Parry, op cit., (1971).

APPENDIX 1: Overview of *The Raj Quartet*

Volume I, The Jewel in the Crown

Part 1: Miss Crane

Part 2: The Macgregor House

Part 3: Sister Ludmilla

Part 4: An Evening at the Club

Part 5: Young Kuma

Part 6: Civil and Military

Part 7: The Bibighar Gardens

These chapter headings are included to show both the scope and direction of travel of Paul Scott's work. Of necessity they reveal some of the omissions I have made in searching for his moral voice. No one can get it all.

The title of the first volume is self-explanatory and is given symbolic and material form in the picture of Victoria Regina and her devoted Indian servants. It is passed from hand to hand throughout the novel, placing Scott's work firmly in its war-time context with the suppression of the 1942 riots following the Quit India Movement, and it represents a stinging critique of Britain's repressive Defence of India Laws. There are hints of the rape to come with the image of a girl running soundlessly – from what? - before taking the reader back in time to the relation between Edwina Crane, Supervisor of the Protestant missionary schools in Mayapore and her teaching companion, Mr. Chaudhuri. Unable to trust the judgement of an Indian to drive through the mob – a key theme in Scott's assessment of Britain's failed divide and rule policy – Mr. Chaudhuri's subsequent murder evokes those other relationships that are pivotal to Scott's moral stance: between Hari Kumar, Macaulay's 'brown-skinned Englishman', (a successful product of his father Duleep's coaching), and Ronald Merrick after their fateful encounter at Sister Ludmilla's sanctuary.

Two narratives are closely interwoven. First, the painful efforts of Hari to assimilate to a life in India that bring him into contact with the unconventional Daphne Manners, and second, Daphne's retrospective diary account written for Lady Manners as she wrestles with her sense of responsibility (and by implication Britain's own obligations) for the events after her rape. The novel concludes with a reference to the raga sung by her daughter Parvati that represents one of the few hopeful signs of a rapprochement between estranged peoples in Scott's otherwise bleak evocation of 'The Situation'.

Volume II, The Day of the Scorpion

Prologue

Book 1: Prisoner in the Fort

Part I: An Arrest,

Part 2: A history

Part 3: A wedding

Book 2: Orders of Release

Part I: The Situation

Part 2: A Christening

Epilogue

This volume deliberately extends Scott's vocal range. It is held together by a Prologue containing his first direct reference to the figure of a Stranger whose role as Scott's *agent provocateur* is crucial in Scott's search for a moral stance; and an Epilogue.

Two families, one British the other Indian serve as point and counterpoint to each other. First a military family, Colonel John and Mildred Layton, their two daughters, Sarah (largely replacing Daphne as one of the key moral interlocutors of the *Quartet*), her sister Susan who becomes psychiatrically ill after the death of her husband Teddie, and their comings and goings to Rose Cottage's cloistered garden. The second is that of the Congress Party leader, Mohammed Ali Kasim (M.A.K.), Congress Party leader, detained in Premanagar jail but allowed to cultivate his small onion patch within the prison walls; his sons, Ahmed, a close friend of Sarah's who later sacrifices his life to Hindu extremists, and Sayed, who becomes a member of the Indian National Army in defiance of his father's wishes. Skillfully delayed, Volume II also details Nigel Rowan's unofficial enquiry of Hari Kumar in Kandipat jail and Hari's defiant refusal to be interrogated.

Weaving backwards and forwards in time, the stranger learns about Susan's attempts to set fire to her child in the Laytons' garden, Mabel's death, and Barbie's expulsion, leaving Sarah to reflect on the image of the scorpion encircled by Susan's ring of fire, destroying itself. A point of contention within the *Quartet* this becomes symptomatic of Britain's moral degeneracy as an imperial power.

Volume III, Towers of Silence

Part 1: The Unknown Indian

Part 2: A Question of Loyalty

Part 3: The Silver in the Mess

Part 4: The honour of the Regiment

Part 5: The Tennis Court

This is Scott's *adagio* and the most elegiac and introspective volume of the *Quartet*. It evokes the gradual realization of Pankot's hill-top military community that their time in India is limited. Unlike the other novels, it begins with a characterization of Barbie Batchelor, Scott's marginal missionary figure and unlikely philosopher and her imagined conversations with the now deceased Edwina Crane. Her subsequent relationship with Mabel Layton, the matriarch of the family, with whom she stays, is a tender one, but short-lived. Following Mabel's death, Barbie is vulnerable to the casual cruelties of the white elite, including the humiliating return of her gift of apostle spoons for Susan's wedding.

She is eventually cast out, silenced by the memsahib coterie, and left to croak her protestations from an unkindly Samaritan hospital bed. Woven into Barbie's downfall are the changing fortunes of the Layton family, including Sarah's seduction by the womanizing Captain Clark and her subsequent abortion that Barbie recognizes as a bid for freedom and a critique of the whole imperial system. Barbie's loss of voice and eventual death on the day the United States dropped their atomic bomb on Hiroshima is a cataclysmic moment in the novel, symptomatic of the failure of Britain's liberal principles which were at the heart of imperialism's civilizing mission.

Volume IV, The Division of the Spoils

Book One: 1945

An Evening at the Maharanee's

Journeys into Uneasy Distances

The Moghul Room

The Dak Bungalow

The Circuit House

Book Two: 1947

Pandora's Box

Volume 4 is more diffuse and reverts to Scott's broader understanding of the complexity of issues underpinning Indian independence and the dissolution of Empire. He uses the figure of Guy Perron, a Cambridge historian as his official ethnographer, as Scott thought – ironically perhaps - that an academic's voice might do better justice to the 'Situation' than simply writing history. Perron returns on a fact-finding mission post-war and his reflections about the difficulty of enquiry dominate the book. It elaborates on Rowan's perusal of the evidence surrounding Hari Kumar's incarceration thus rendering him a more sympathetic character than is revealed earlier on.

Also included is one of the most moving scenes of the book: M.A.K.'s attempt to instruct his son Sayed in his forthcoming trial for his defection to the INA, but without betraying his own loyalty to the notion of a united India. The Volume reaches a climax with Ahmed Kasim's heroic gesture as he jumps from the train to protect its English travellers in the compartment and it is left to Sarah to inveigh against the implicit rightness of his sacrifice. The novel concludes with Guy Perron's abortive visit to Hari who is now living in impoverished circumstances. Perron's decision not to leave the intended calling card would have been the unkindest parting gesture of all.

Staying On

This final volume seems something of an afterthought, a relief, perhaps from Scott's exhaustive attempt to do justice to his experience of writing about the *Raj*, although the voices of its key protagonists are audible in the earlier volumes, mainly through letters that reveal Sarah's marriage to Perron. Part tragedy, part comedy, it features Lucy Smalley and her irascible husband, Tusker, clinging to the relics of a life that is fast becoming quaint via an apology of a garden. Lucy's imaginary conversations with her ex-lover and forthcoming visitor about her dreams, hopes and dashed expectations dominate the book as the couple attempts to deal with the new entrepreneurial class of Indians who have replaced the former British military and civilian Pankot elite. Different encounters with Mr. and Mrs. Bhoobhoy, Colonel Menekhtara, his wife Coocoo, Father Sebastian the incoming priest, and their servants, Ibrahim and Joseph bring out the problems and possibilities for reaching across when old hierarchies are undermined. This last novel is usually seen as bringing the *Quartet* together in a final audit. and many of the stray chords return to their home key. But not quite: it is the imperative to keep on trying which is key to Scott's moral voice.

APPENDIX 2: Paul Scott's Response to Benita Parry

As Benita Parry's critique is pivotal to this enquiry, let me quote in detail Scott's thoughts about her in his letters.

First, in a couple of letters to Francine Weinbaum, the academic with whom he conducted a lengthy correspondence.⁴⁸⁷ He writes:

You will have been sent an article by a woman called BP who has taken a long intellectual stroll around the *Quartet* in a thing called 'The South East Asian Review (Why South Asia? Thought that started with Burma)? I can't understand a word of it – rather, those I understand immediately seem cancelled out by the next paragraph.

And then seizing on an example that jarred, he went on:

... she's got at least one thing seriously wrong: the scene of the sleeping soldiers in the guard room, which she thinks sentimental.⁴⁸⁸ I was of course ... thinking of them as young Englishmen who were better nourished than they would have been if the Empire had never existed. Physically, not spiritually. For heavens' sake. There are some people who can't think of India without thinking of its 'spirituality'. It's a load of nonsense when you try to transcribe it – as Miss Parry has done – in imperial terms. Ask me to point to one place in the world that is truly materialistic, and I'll point to India.

This seemed to lead to a generalized dislike of her work, and an uncharacteristic disinclination to probe his own inevitable selectivity. Where academic voices were concerned, he tended to keep his distance.

Second, to the editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* Arthur Crook, 9th April 1972⁴⁸⁹

Thank you for the review copy of Benita Parry's *Delusions and Discoveries: India in the British Imagination, 1880-1930* which I found sort of self-defeating. By imagination she means literary imagination and by literary imagination a fiction-writer's imagination which limits her thesis far enough to produce a serious imbalance – of the kind currently being complained of in a BBC series about the Empire ... A further limitation ... is that by her own admission there were during her chosen period, only two major writers on the subject of India, Kipling and Forster. But this has not stopped her

⁴⁸⁷ In Haswell, op cit., (2011), Vol.11, p.269-70, November 5th and p. 273, November 22nd

⁴⁸⁸ This is the scene in *DSp*. Where Guy Perron sits in the barracks watching the faces of sleeping soldiers and recognises that 'India was there, in the skull, in the bones of the body', op. cit., p.103

⁴⁸⁹ Parry, op.cit., (1998)

discussing the words of others. In fact, her first hundred pages are made up of some swift history and a study of romantic lady novelists like Maud Diver – which is rather like discussing the works of Denise Robins and Barbara Cartland in the course of a study of Contemporary English Beliefs. The Kipling and Forster pieces do not, in my view, compensate ...

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